

# **Transatlantsko sodelovanje in diaspora kot mehka moč – vloga in pomen izobražencev v Združenih državah Amerike in Kanada**

---

**Zbrane ugotovitve Ciljno raziskovalnega projekta V7-2118**

**Ljubljana, 2023**



**NOVA  
UNIVERZA**

# **Transatlantic cooperation and the diaspora as a soft power - the role and importance of educated people in the United States and Canada**

---

**Summary of findings from the Research Project V7-2118**

**Ljubljana, 2023**



ASEF

AMERICAN SLOVENIAN  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

## CRP 2021 številka V7-2118

---

**Obdobje trajanja projekta:** 1. 10. 2021–30. 9. 2023

Sodelujoči instituciji: Inštitut ASEF in Nova Univerza, Fakulteta za državne in evropske študije

Vodja raziskovalnega projekta: dr. Marinka Žitnik

Sodelavci raziskovalnega projekta: dr. Gorazd Justinek, dr. Dejan Valentinčič, Barbara Zupan, Mark Anže Šuštar, Kaja Cunk

Oblikovanje in prelom: Lea Husel

Projekt št. V7-2118 je sofinancirala Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije iz državnega proračuna in naslednji sofinancerji: Ministrstvo za zunanje in evropske zadeve.

Vsebinski spremljevalec projekta št. V7-2118 na Ministrstvu za zunanje in evropske zadeve je Andrej Medica.

## CRP 2021 number V7-2118

---

**Project period:** 1. 10. 2021 - 30. 9. 2023

Partners: Institute ASEF for Education and Research and New University, Faculty of Government and European studies

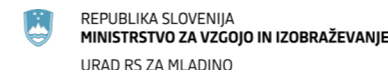
Head of research project: Marinka Žitnik, Ph.D.

Collaborators of the research project: Gorazd Justinek, Ph.D., Dejan Valentinčič, Ph.D., Barbara Zupan, Mark Anže Šuštar, Kaja Cunk

Oblikovanje in prelom: Lea Husel

The authors acknowledge the financial support from the state budget by the Slovenian Research Agency (project No. V7-2118) and the following additional founders: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

Content supervisor of project no. V7-2118 at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is Andrej Medica.



## O Inštitutu ASEF za izobraževanje in raziskovanje

---

## About the Institute ASEF for Education and Research

---

## ASEF

je inštitut, ki se posveča krejitvi slovenskega izobraževalnega delovanja in spodbujanju sodelovanja med slovenskimi intelektualci in raziskovalci po svetu.

Naše poslanstvo je zagotoviti obsežno paleto učinkovitih štipendij, inovativnih donacijskih programov, učnih virov in olajšati mednarodne izmenjave študentom in profesorjem.

Inštitut so ustanovili trije cenjeni profesorji:



**Dr. Jure Leskovec**  
profesor računalništva  
na univerzi Stanford



**Dr. Andrej Košmrlj**  
izredni profesor za strojništvo in  
vesoljsko inženirstvo na univerzi  
Princeton



**Dr. Marinka Žitnik**  
docentka za biomedicinsko  
informatiko na univerzi Harvard

## ASEF

Institute ASEF is a dynamic institute dedicated to strengthening Slovenian educational activities and fostering cooperation between Slovenian intellectuals and researchers around the world. Our mission is to provide a comprehensive range of effective scholarships, innovative grant programmes, learning resources and facilitate international exchanges for students and teachers.

The Institute was founded by three distinguished professors:



**Jure Leskovec, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor of Computer  
Science at Stanford University



**Andrej Košmrlj, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor of Mechanical  
and Aerospace Engineering at  
Princeton University



**Marinka Žitnik, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor of Biomedical  
Informatics at Harvard University

# Inštitut ASEF

Tem uspešnim posameznikom se je pridružilo **več kot 120 uveljavljenih raziskovalcev** z vsega sveta, ki igrajo ključno vlogo pri izvajanju ASEF študentskih programov za mlade in povezavalnih programov za slovenske raziskovalce po svetu in v Sloveniji. So tudi pomemben del **ASEF tutorskega programa**, ki temelji na delu študentov ASEF v majhnih skupinah, ki jih vodi individualni tutor (t.j. profesor) na področju študija študenta. Vsaka skupina dela na izbrano temo, čemur sledi samostojno raziskovanje in pisanje esejev.

Od ustanovitve **leta 2014** je ASEF v 10-tedenski študentski program vključili več kot **200 mladih**. Ti ASEF študenti dejavno sodelujejo v raznolikem naboru nacionalnih in mednarodnih dejavnosti, kot je na primer serija predavanj ASEF Mladi umi, kjer ASEF študenti predstavljajo aktualne raziskave.

Poleg prizadevanj za študentiranje je Inštitut ASEF predan raziskovalnemu delu. Naše raziskovalno delo zajema pomembna **družbeno-razvojna področja**, kot so digitalna transformacija, privabljanje strokovnjakov, kroženje možganov, znanstvena diplomacija, internacionalizacija visokega šolstva in razvoj študentskih programov.

Več o Inštitutu ASEF lahko preberete na uradni spletni strani: [www.asef.net](http://www.asef.net)

predanost  
raziskovalnemu delu

več kot  
200 mladih

več kot  
120 uveljavljenih  
raziskovalcev

commitment  
to research

more than  
200 young people

more than  
120 established  
researchers

# Institute ASEF

These successful individuals are joined by **more than 120 established researchers** from around the world who play a key role in the implementation of ASEF fellowship programs for young people and supporting programs for Slovenian researchers around the world and in Slovenia. They are also an important part of the **ASEF Tutoring Programme**, which is based on ASEF Fellows working in small groups led by an individual tutor (i.e. a professor) in the Fellow's field of study. Each group works on a chosen topic, followed by independent research and essay writing.

Since its establishment in **2014**, ASEF has enrolled more than **200 young people** in the 10-week fellowship programme. These ASEF fellows actively participate in a diverse range of national and international activities, such as the ASEF Young Minds lecture series, where current and former fellows present current research.

In addition to its scholarship efforts, the ASEF Institute is committed to research. Our research covers important **socio-developmental areas** such as digital transformation, attracting professionals, brain circulation, science diplomacy, internationalisation of higher education and the development of fellowship programmes.

You can find out more about the ASEF Institute on its website: [www.asef.net](http://www.asef.net).

## O ciljno-raziskovalnem projektu

---

Projekt z naslovom “**Transatlantsko sodelovanje in diaspora kot mehka moč – vloga in pomen izobražencev v Združenih državah Amerike in Kanadi**” je rezultat plodnega sodelovanja med Inštitutom ASEF in Novo Univerzo, Fakulteto za državne in evropske študije. Glavni cilj projekta je bil raziskati in razložiti vlogo in pomen **slovenske diaspore v Združenih državah Amerike in Kanadi** kot ključnega dejavnika slovenske mehke moči.

Da bi ta cilj dosegli, smo izvedli obsežno raziskavo, ki je bila razdeljena na več korakov.

Da bi pridobljene informacije postavili v širši kontekst, smo analizirali tudi primere dobrih praks iz drugih držav, ki so se ukvarjale s podobnimi vprašanji. Na koncu smo združili vse te ugotovitve in pripravili celovito poročilo, ki združuje tako kvantitativne kot kvalitativne podatke ter analize primerov. S tem smo poglobili razumevanje vloge in pomena slovenske diaspore v ZDA in Kanadi kot ključnega dejavnika slovenske mehke moči.

Ta dokument povzema **ključne ugotovitve projekta** in predstavlja naš prispevek k boljšemu razumevanju razvoja, obsega in potenciala slovenskih intelektualcev, kulturnikov in gospodarstvenikov, ki živijo v Severni Ameriki, zlasti tistih, ki so se izselili po letu 1991. S tem želimo odpreti **novo perspektivo transatlantskega sodelovanja** ter osvetliti interes, možnosti in vpliv slovenske diaspore pri promociji Slovenije, zastopanju njenih interesov ter krepitvi njene mednarodne prisotnosti in globalne prepoznavnosti.

The project entitled “**Transatlantic cooperation and the diaspora as a soft power - the role and importance of educated people in the United States and Canada**” is the result of a fruitful collaboration between **the Institute ASEF and Nova University, Faculty of Government and European Studies**. The main objective of the project was to explore and explain the role and **importance of the Slovenian diaspora in the United States of America and Canada** as a key factor of Slovenian soft power.

To achieve this goal, we carried out a large-scale study, divided into several steps. First, we obtained statistical data on Slovenian intellectuals, culturists and businessmen who resided in the USA and Canada. These data have been systematically documented and stored in our database. In addition, we used quantitative methodology, including surveys of recent Slovenian migrants in the USA and Canada. In this way, we have collected a large amount of quantitative data. We also conducted qualitative research using focus groups, which allowed us to gain detailed and in-depth insights into the Slovenian diaspora’s understanding of the issues. To put the information gathered into a broader context, we also analysed examples of good practice from other countries that have dealt with similar issues. Finally, we have brought all these findings together to produce a comprehensive report that combines both quantitative and qualitative data and case studies. This has deepened our understanding of the role and importance of the Slovenian diaspora in the USA and Canada as a key factor of Slovenian soft power.

This document **summarises the key findings of the project** and represents our contribution to a better understanding of the development, scope and potential of Slovenian intellectuals, culturists and business people living in North America, especially those who have emigrated since 1991. The aim is to open up a **new perspective of transatlantic cooperation** and to highlight the interest, potential and influence of the Slovenian diaspora in promoting Slovenia, representing its interests and strengthening its international presence and global visibility.

## About the research project

---

## Vpogled v politike na področju krepitve mehke moči

---

V letu 2021 zaključen raziskovalni projekt “Omilititev posledic bega možganov in krepitev mehanizma kroženja možganov”, pod vodstvom dr. Dejana Valentinčiča, je bil osnova za pregled ukrepov dvajsetih držav, vezanih na krepitev mehke moči.

**Romunija** ima zaradi zelo visokega izseljevanja eno izmed vladnih prioritete privabljanje visokoizobraženih Romunov nazaj v domovino. Za to jim ponujajo različne ugodnosti ob investicijah, odpiranje novih podjetij ter zagonskih projektov na področju podjetništva. Njena soseda **Bolgarija** je uvedla spletno platformo »Vodič v Bolgarijo«, na kateri objavljajo informacije o prostih delovnih mestih ter nudijo informacije in nasvete o administrativnih postopkih. Družinski člani vračajočih, ki ne govorijo bolgarsko, so upravičeni do vrednostnih bonov za učenje bolgarskega jezika.

**Češka** skuša izseljence nagovoriti s tradicionalnimi politikami, kjer kot najpomembnejšo vidijo program »Češke šole brez meja«. Gre za prostočasni dopolnilni pouk češkega jezika in domoznanstva. Pod določenimi pogoji lahko češki državljani zaprosijo za materialno pomoč v povezavi s selitvijo in z nadaljnjim prebivanjem ter integracijo. **Slovaška** ima vzpostavljen portal »Careers without borders«, in skupaj z izbranimi slovaškimi podjetji slovaške strokovnjake na tujem spodbuja, da naj se vrnejo na Slovaško ter tam v polnosti izkoristijo svoje potencialne. **Madžarska** svoje ukrepe namenja bolj fokusirano na pripadnike starejše diaspore in še posebej avtohtone

## Insight into policies in the field of soft power strengthening

---

In 2021, the research project “Mitigation of the consequences of brain drain and strengthening of the brain circulation mechanism”, under the leadership of Dr. Dejan Valentinčič, was the basis for the review of the measures of twenty countries related to the strengthening of soft power.

Due to the very high level of emigration, **Romania** has one of the government’s priorities to attract highly educated Romanians back to their homeland. For this, they are offered various benefits for investments, opening new companies and start-up projects in the field of entrepreneurship. Its neighbor Bulgaria has launched an online platform “Guide to Bulgaria”, where they publish information about job vacancies and provide information and advice on administrative procedures. Family members of returnees who do not speak Bulgarian are entitled to vouchers for learning the Bulgarian language.

**The Czech Republic** tries to appeal to emigrants with traditional policies, where they see the “Czech Schools Without Borders” program as the most important. It is a free-time supplementary lesson in the Czech language and local studies. Under certain conditions, Czech citizens can apply for material assistance in connection with moving and with continued residence and integration. **Slovakia** has established the “Careers without borders” portal and, together with selected Slovak companies, encourages Slovak experts abroad to return to Slovakia and use their potential to the fullest. **Hungary** focuses its

madžarske skupnosti v sosednjih državah. Vzpostavljena sta bila programa, ki Madžarom zunaj Madžarske ponujata štipendije za preživetje določenega obdobja na Madžarskem in spoznavanje jezika, plesa, tradicije, vere in drugih kulturnih prvin. Po drugem programu pa mednje odhajajo učitelji iz Madžarske, ki jih učijo enakih vsebin.

**Poljska** je v okviru vladnega programa, ki je bil sprejet za obdobje 2015–2020 vzpostavila informacijsko točko, ki potencialne povratnike obvešča o davčnih in pokojninskih zadevah, in kako urediti dokumente. Ukrep, ki ga je sprejelo več mest in ga velja posebej omeniti, so nastanitvene kapacitete za povratnike, in posebne ugodnosti za nastanitev v obliki oprostitve davka ali subvencij.

**Litva** je leta 2011 zagnala program »Global Lithuania diaspora program«. Hkrati je vlada vzpostavila spletno stran »I choose Lithuania«, ki promovira povratništvo in nudi informacije. Omeniti velja tudi nevladno organizacijo »Global Lithuanian Leaders«, v katero je včlanjenih prek 1.700 profesionalcev, ki živijo v 49 državah. Povezujejo se z namenom prenosa znanja, ki bi državi pomagalo pri razvoju. Z volitvami leta 2020 je država uvedla tudi poseben volilni okraj in poslansko mesto, ki ga izvolijo Litovci v diaspori. **Latvija** je leta 2019 sprejela Zakon o diaspori. Leta 2018 je ministrstvo za zaščito okolja in regionalni razvoj zagnalo pilotni projekt za spodbujanje vračanja družin PAPS (kratica latvijskega poimenovanja za Regional Remigration Coordinator project). Program ima pet regionalnih koordinatorjev, ki pomagajo pri iskanju zapos-

litve, nastanitve, urejanju otroških dodatkov, vpisovanju v šole ter pri prijavljanju za finančno pomoč, če ima nekdo namen odpreti podjetje v Latviji. Da bi država izboljšala institucionalni odnos do diaspore, je uvedla tudi posebno mesto ambasadorja na zunanjem ministrstvu, ki je pristojen posebej za diasporo.

V **Španiji** je velika pozornost namenjena spodbujanju ustanavljanja podjetij sodobnih izseljencev in privabljanju raziskovalcev – s poenostavitvami habilitacij, lažjim priznavanjem v tujini pridobljene izobrazbe, ponujanjem posebnih mentorstev itn. Nudijo tudi pomoč pri načrtovanju vrnitve in selitvi. Zelo podobni so tudi pristopi Portugalske, le da je še večji fokus na spodbujanju podjetništva ter da je sistem poleg nacionalno organiziran tudi na regionalni ravni. **Portugalski** izseljenci in njihovi otroci imajo prav tako pravico do prijave na visokošolski študij na Portugalskem, zanje je tudi rezerviranih 7 % študijskih mest, namen je, da bi za tem ostali na Portugalskem. Obstajajo tudi davčne olajšave za povratnike.

Država, ki ima prav tako davčne olajšave za povratnike, je **Italija**. Davčne olajšave so namenjene vsem, medtem ko so bonitete glede javnih stanovanj in pokojninskih ugodnosti namenjene le italijanskim državljanom na tujem.

Povsem drugače pa je na severu celine. Države z najmanj dodelanim odnosom do diaspore so skandinavske države. **Švedska** nima posebnih politik glede švedskih izseljencev v tujini niti posebne zakonodaje ali državne

measures more on the members of the older diaspora and especially the indigenous Hungarian communities in neighboring countries. Two programs were established that offer scholarships to Hungarians outside of Hungary to spend a certain period in Hungary and learn the language, dance, tradition, religion and other cultural elements. According to the second program, teachers from Hungary are leaving among them, teaching them the same content.

As part of the government program adopted for the period 2015-2020, **Poland** has established an information point to inform potential returnees about tax and pension matters and how to arrange documents. A measure adopted by several cities that deserves special mention are accommodation capacities for returnees and special benefits for accommodation in the form of tax exemptions or subsidies.

In 2011, **Lithuania** launched the Global Lithuania Diaspora Program. At the same time, the government set up the "I choose Lithuania" website, which promotes return and provides information. It is also worth mentioning the non-governmental organization "Global Lithuanian Leaders", which has over 1,700 professionals living in 49 countries as members. They connect with the aim of transferring knowledge that would help the country in its development. With the 2020 elections, the country also introduced a special electoral district and parliamentary seat, which are elected by Lithuanians in the diaspora. In

2019, Latvia adopted the Law on Diaspora. In 2018, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development launched a pilot project to promote the return of PAPS families (the Latvian acronym for the Regional Remigration Coordinator project). The program has five regional coordinators who help with finding a job, housing, arranging child benefits, enrolling in schools, and applying for financial assistance if someone intends to open a business in **Latvia**. In order to improve the institutional attitude towards the diaspora, the country also introduced a special position of ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is specifically responsible for the diaspora.

In **Spain**, great attention is devoted to encouraging the establishment of companies by modern emigrants and attracting researchers - by simplifying habilitation, easier recognition of education obtained abroad, offering special mentorships, etc. They also offer assistance with return planning and relocation. **Portugal's** approaches are also very similar, except that there is an even greater focus on encouraging entrepreneurship and that the system is organized not only nationally but also regionally. Portuguese emigrants and their children also have the right to apply for higher education in Portugal, 7% of study places are reserved for them, the aim is to stay in Portugal after that. There are also tax breaks for returnees.

A country that also has tax breaks for returnees is **Italy**. Tax credits are for everyone, while public housing and pension benefits are only for Italian citizens abroad.



ustanove, ki bi zasledovala njihove interese. Podobno velja za **Finsko**. Vlada sicer vsakih pet let sprejme program vladne politike, ki je namenjen poglobljanju stikov med Finsko in v tujini živečimi Finci. **Danska** je še bolj mačehovska, saj Dancev v tujini finančno ne podpira, izseljeni državljani precej hitro začnejo izgubljati svoje pravice in ugodnosti socialne države. Diaspora kulturne aktivnosti ali poučevanje otrok izvaja na lastne stroške oz. s podporo gostujoče države.

Država, ki je znana po veliki diaspori in izdelanih politikah do nje, je **Irska**. Velika pozornost je namenjena predvsem informiranju; obstaja več platform, ki nudijo praktične informacije in nasvete. Hkrati so se lotili olajševanja postopkov in ustvarjanja pogojev za lažje vračanje. Odločili so se za odpravljanje številnih ovir, ki posameznikom otežujejo vračanje ali jih od tega odvračajo. Izraziteje kot katera koli država Irska osrednjo pozornost namenja podjetništvu – ustvarjanju različnih programov in spodbud, ki bi pripadnike iz diaspore privabljali k odpiranju podjetij na Irskem, in ugodnemu podjetniškemu okolju, ki spodbuja tuje investicije.

**Grčija** se spoprijema z velikim izseljevanjem, ki se je še dodatno okrepilo v času hude ekonomske krize v državi. Tako vlada namenja številne ukrepe, ki bi spodbudili vračanje. Kot enega zanimivejših omenimo, da je vlada pred izbruhom covidne krize načrtovala obsežen program, s katerim bi spodbudila vračanje visokoizobraženih grških državljanov v domovino. 500 vrhunsko izobraženim

osebam, ki bi se vrnile, bi zagotovili primerljive življenjske pogoje, kot jih imajo v tujini, vključujoč 3.000 EUR plače. **Črna gora** se trudi izobraziti pripadnike diaspore privabljati predvsem z ugodno davčno in socialno politiko. Tako inovativnim zagonskim podjetjem in naprednim raziskovalnim projektom oprostijo plačilo davka na dohodek in del obveznih prispevkov za socialno zavarovanje.

Tudi **Hrvaška** je poskušala prevzeti nekatere dobre prakse Irske. Kot poseben ukrep za spodbujanje vračanja je bil na Osrednjem uradu za Hrvate zunaj Republike Hrvaške vzpostavljen Urad dobrodošlice, ki zainteresirane za vračanje informira o carinskih in davčnih okoliščinah za povratnike, možnostih zaposlitve, priznavanju izobrazbe in poklicnih kvalifikacij, pridobivanju državljanstva itn. Povratnikom je na voljo tudi svetovalec oz. mentor, ki jim pomaga skozi postopke. Drugi ukrep, ki ga posebej omenimo, so kvote za študente iz izseljenstva, ki jih morajo imeti vsi študijski programi.

It is completely different in the north of the continent. The countries with the least elaborate attitude towards the diaspora are the Scandinavian countries. **Sweden** does not have specific policies regarding Swedish expatriates abroad, nor does it have specific legislation or state institutions to pursue their interests. The same applies to **Finland**. Every five years, the government adopts a government policy program aimed at deepening contacts between Finland and Finns living abroad. **Denmark** is even more step-motherly, as it does not financially support Danes abroad, emigrant citizens begin to lose their rights and benefits of the welfare state rather quickly. Diaspora carries out cultural activities or teaching children at its own expense or with the support of the host country.

A country that is known for its large diaspora and the elaborate policies towards it is Ireland. A lot of attention is paid to information; there are several platforms that provide practical information and advice. At the same time, they set about simplifying procedures and creating conditions for easier return. They decided to remove many obstacles that make it difficult for individuals to return or discourage them from doing so. More than any other country, Ireland focuses on entrepreneurship - creating various programs and incentives that would attract members of the diaspora to open businesses in Ireland, and a favorable business environment that encourages foreign investment.

Greece is dealing with large-scale emigration, which has further intensified during the severe economic crisis in the

country. Thus, the government is taking a number of measures to encourage return. As one of the more interesting ones, we should mention that before the outbreak of the covid crisis, the government planned an extensive program to encourage the return of highly educated Greek citizens to their homeland. 500 highly educated persons who would return would be provided with comparable living conditions as they have abroad, including a 3,000 EUR salary.

Montenegro tries to attract educated members of the diaspora mainly with favorable tax and social policies. Thus, innovative start-up companies and advanced research projects are exempted from paying income tax and part of the mandatory social security contributions.

Croatia has also tried to adopt some of Ireland's good practices. As a special measure to promote return, the Central Office for Croats outside the Republic of Croatia has established a Welcome Office, which informs those interested in returning about customs and tax conditions for returnees, employment opportunities, recognition of education and professional qualifications, acquisition of citizenship, etc. Returnees are also provided with a counselor or a mentor who helps them through the procedures. Another measure to be mentioned in particular is the quotas for expatriate students, which all study programs must have.

## UGOTOVITVE KVANTITATIVNEGA DELA RAZISKAVE

---

Na podlagi analize podatkov kvantitativnega dela raziskave lahko zaključimo, da obstajajo:

## FINDINGS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE PART OF THE RESEARCH

---

Based on the analysis of the data from the quantitative part of the survey, we can conclude that they exist:

# 1

## Potrebe po krepitvi dejavnosti za povezovanje slovenske diaspore po svetu in povezovanje teh skupnosti z matično domovino

---

Večina udeležencev meni, da Slovenija ne izvaja dovolj dejavnosti za povezovanje slovenske diaspore po svetu niti za povezovanje teh skupnosti z matično državo. Predlagajo večjo informacijsko podporo, organizacijo dogodkov, finančno podporo organizacijam ter vzpostavitev baze Slovencev v tujini.

Večina udeležencev meni, da primanjkuje transparentnega poročanja o obstoječih možnostih za sodelovanje. Nekateri izmed njih so izpostavili tudi pomanjkanje angažiranosti za sodelovanje ter zapletenost postopkov za sodelovanje.

Kljub zaznamim pomanjkljivostim pa večina udeležencev izraža interes za sodelovanje s Slovenijo na svojem profesionalnem področju, čeprav do sedaj še niso imeli takšnih izkušenj. Najbolj perspektivni vidiki promocije se jim zdijo slovenske tradicije in kultura ter turizem, nato pa promocija slovenskega znanja in dosežkov. Številni udeleženci že samostojno delajo na promociji Slovenije in si želijo to nadaljevati tudi v prihodnosti.

## The need to strengthen activities to connect the Slovenian diaspora around the world and to link these communities with their home country

---

The majority of participants felt that Slovenia does not carry out enough activities to connect the Slovenian diaspora around the world, nor to connect these communities with their country of origin. They propose more information support, the organisation of events, financial support for organisations and the creation of a database of Slovenians abroad.

Most participants also felt that there is a lack of transparent reporting on existing opportunities for cooperation. Some of them also highlighted the lack of commitment to participation and the complexity of the procedures for participation.

# 1

Despite the perceived shortcomings, the majority of participants expressed interest in working with Slovenia in their professional field, even though they have not yet had such an experience. The most promising aspects of promotion are Slovenian traditions and culture, tourism, and then the promotion of Slovenian knowledge and achievements. Many of the participants are already working independently to promote Slovenia and would like to continue doing so in the future.

# 2

## Interesi za organizacijo dogodkov za mreženje in krepitev informacijskih dejavnosti

---

Udeleženci izražajo željo po sodelovanju preko participacije v slovenskih društvih in organizacijah, vzpostavljanju stikov med Slovenijo ter podjetji in organizacijami v ZDA in Kanadi ter širjenju informacij o uspešnih praksah sodelovanja med slovenskimi kolegi v ZDA in Kanadi. Tisti, ki niso izrazili interesa za sodelovanje, večinoma niso nikoli razmišljali o tej možnosti, kar kaže na potencial za prihodnje sodelovanje ob pravih priložnostih.

Gospodarstveniki so mnenja, da ni dovolj aktivnosti za promocijo Slovenije potencialnim investitorjem v ZDA ali Kanadi. Predlagajo organizacijo dogodkov za mreženje, transparentno poročanje o možnostih sodelovanja investitorjev s Slovenijo in poudarjajo promocijo najperspektivnejših sektorjev slovenskega gospodarstva.

# 2

## Interest in organising events to network and strengthen information activities

---

Participants expressed their desire to cooperate through participation in Slovenian associations and organisations, to establish contacts between Slovenia and companies and organisations in the USA and Canada, and to disseminate information on successful cooperation practices among Slovenian colleagues in the USA and Canada. Those who did not express an interest in cooperation had mostly never considered this option, which shows the potential for future cooperation at the right opportunities.

Economists are of the opinion that there is not enough activity to promote Slovenia to potential investors in the USA or Canada. They propose the organisation of networking events, transparent reporting on opportunities for investors to cooperate with Slovenia, and emphasise the promotion of the most promising sectors of the Slovenian economy.

# 3

## Dobre prakse z multiplikacijskim učinkom in možnostjo prenosa

---

Udeležencem se zdi, da obstajajo dobre prakse v obliki že obstoječih dogodkov in prisotnosti predstavnikov Slovenije na teh dogodkih.

Po drugi strani pa kulturniki niso navedli nobene konkretne dobre prakse, kar pomeni, da je tukaj še veliko prostora za napredek. Udeleženci so mnenja, da bi Slovenija lahko obstoječim or-

ganizacijam, ki delujejo v namen povezovanja Slovencev po svetu, nudila dodatno (finančno) podporo in pomoč ter da bi država tudi sama lahko organizirala dogodke ter vzpostavila seznam Slovencev, živečih v ZDA ali Kanadi, ter identificirala tiste, ki so pripravljeni sodelovati.

# 3

## Good practices with multiplier effect and transferability.

---

Participants felt that there are good practices in the form of existing events and the presence of Slovenian representatives at these events.

On the other hand, no concrete good practice was cited by the cultural operators, which means that there is still room for improvement. The participants were of the opinion that Slove-

nia could provide additional (financial) support and assistance to existing organisations working to connect Slovenians around the world, and that the country itself could organise events and create a list of Slovenians living in the USA or Canada and identify those who are willing to participate.

# 4

## Razlike med anketiranimi udeleženci glede na državo oziroma področje dela

---

Udeleženci iz ZDA pogosto izražajo mnenje, da so nekatera področja sodelovanja z Slovenijo bolj perspektivna v primerjavi s kanadskimi udeleženci. Kanadski gospodarstveniki so namreč prepričani, da Slovenija ne podpira dovolj njihovega delovanja.

V starostni skupini starejših udeležencev je pogosto zaznati, da

si sodelovanja v prihodnje ne želijo, čeprav so v preteklosti že sodelovali. Nasprotno pa mlajši udeleženci izražajo veliko željo po sodelovanju s Slovenijo.

Med intelektualci je zaznati večjo željo po sodelovanju s Slovenijo, medtem ko gospodarstveniki pogosteje izražajo željo po samostojni promociji Slovenije.

# 4

## Differences between respondents, by country or field of work

---

US participants often express the view that some areas of cooperation with Slovenia are more promising compared to Canadian participants. Canadian business people believe that Slovenia does not support their activities sufficiently.

The older age group of participants often indicates that they do not want to

participate in the future, even though they have participated in the past. In contrast, younger participants express a strong desire to work with Slovenia.

Among intellectuals, there is a greater desire to cooperate with Slovenia, while business people are more likely to express a desire to promote Slovenia independently.

## UGOTOVITVE KVALITATIVNEGA DELA RAZISKAVE

---

Na osnovi rezultatov pridobljenih iz anket, smo oblikovali načrt za izvedbo kvalitativne faze. Izbrali smo metodo fokusnih skupin, ki so služile nadaljnjemu poglobljenemu raziskovanju in boljšemu razumevanju zbranih informacij. Z izbiro najrelevantnejših sogovornikov iz obstoječe komunikacijske mreže ter baze izobraženih in aktivnih posameznikov v diaspori v ZDA in Kanadi smo omogočili izvedbo podrobnih pogovorov. Izvedli smo tri fokusne skupine, v katerih je skupaj sodelovalo 19 oseb. Udeleženci so 24 ur pred pričetkom fokusne skupine, ki je potekala preko platforme ZOOM, po elektronski pošti prejeli oris tematik in vprašanj, o katerih je bilo govora. Vnaprej smo pridobili soglasje za snemanje ter hrambo zapisov v lastnem arhivu. Imena sodelujočih ne objavljamo javno in osebni podatki so prikriti in zaupni, shranjeni zgolj v arhivu Inštituta ASEF.

Na podlagi analize podatkov kvalitativnega dela raziskave lahko zaključimo, da obstajajo:

## FINDINGS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE PART OF THE RESEARCH

---

Based on the results of the interviews, we have developed a plan for the implementation of the qualitative phase. We chose the method of focus groups to further explore and better understand the information gathered. By selecting the most relevant interviewees from our existing communication network and database of educated and active individuals in the diaspora in the US and Canada, we were able to conduct in-depth interviews. Three focus groups were held, with a total of 19 participants. 24 hours before the start of the focus group, which took place via the ZOOM platform, participants received an outline of the topics and issues discussed by email. We have obtained prior consent to record and store the recordings in our own archives. The names of the participants are not made public and the personal data are concealed and confidential, stored only in the archives of the ASEF Institute.

Based on the analysis of the data from the qualitative part of the research, we can conclude that the following do exist:

## Pobude za promocijo Slovenije in vez z domovino preko štipendijskih programov

Udeleženci so delili svoje izkušnje s štipendijskimi programi, ter razpravljali o pomenu spodbujanja vezi s Slovenijo in krepitve raziskovalnih sodelovanj med Slovenijo in ZDA oziroma Kanado.

”

*Pred nekaj leti smo mlajšim generacijam, da bi jih navdušili, podelili štipendijo preko Univerze v Mariboru in UBC [University of British Columbia], da bi prišli v Maribor in študirali slovenščino. In to je bilo čudovito. Trije otroci so imeli okoli 18, 19 let in to jim je spremenilo življenje.*

“

Udeleženci so podelili tudi predloge, kako bi lahko znanstvenike, aktivne v tujini, s slovenskimi koreninami, spodbudili k vračanju v domovino in

prispevanju k slovenskemu akademskemu in kulturnemu razvoju.

”

*Ja, med mojim doktoratom je v Sloveniji obstajal odličen program Adfutura, za katerega nisem prepričan, ali še obstaja, vendar je bil v bistvu namenjen podiplomskim študentom v Sloveniji, ki so se odločili za izkušnjo v tujini in dodatno usposabljanje v tujini. Tako da bi bila to lahko odlična platforma, da bi slovenske znanstvenike pripeljali nazaj ali pa jim omogočili, da bi jih vsaj začasno pripeljali nazaj na neke vrste študijski dopust v Slovenijo. In nisem prepričan, ali to obstaja, ampak mislim, da bi bilo zelo dragoceno, če bi talente vrnili nazaj in izkušnje, ki so jih zbrali v tujini, delili v Sloveniji.*

“

## Initiatives to promote Slovenia and the link with the homeland through fellowship programmes

Participants shared their experiences with fellowship programmes and discussed the importance of fostering links with Slovenia and strengthening research collaborations between Slovenia and the USA/Canada.

”

*A few years ago, in order to inspire the younger generations, we gave a scholarship through the University of Maribor and UBC [University of British Columbia] to come to Maribor and study Slovenian. And that was wonderful. Three of the children were around 18, 19 years old and it changed their lives.*

“

Participants also offered suggestions on how to encourage scientists active abroad with Slovenian roots to return to their homeland and con-

tribute to Slovenian academic and cultural development.

”

*Yes, during my PhD there was a great programme in Slovenia called Adfutura, which I'm not sure if it still exists, but it was basically for postgraduate students in Slovenia who decided to have an experience abroad and additional training abroad. So this could be a great platform to bring Slovenian scientists back or to allow them to be brought back to Slovenia, at least temporarily, for some kind of study leave. And I'm not sure if it exists, but I think it would be very valuable to bring the talent back and share the experience they have gained abroad in Slovenia.*

“



# 2

## Razlogi za nevrčanje

---

Ob poudarjanju pomena študentskih programov pa več udeležencev opozori tudi na pomen vizije ob vrčanju. Udeleženci so poudarjali odsotnost jasne strategije in načrta za ohranjanje perspektivnih mladih v Sloveniji.

”

*Tja se je preselil, ko je bil star približno 18 let, z zelo veliko študentsko Marthe Graham in plesalcev, vendar se ni nikoli zares vrnil v Slovenijo. Zato imamo veliko takšnih primerov, zelo nadarjenih ljudi, pogosto na področju umetnosti in glasbe, ki jim je zunaj zelo težko uspeti. In če nimajo neke podpore in priznanja iz Slovenije, si rečejo, zakaj bi se vrčali?*

“

# 2

## Reasons for non-return

---

While stressing the importance of fellowship programmes, several participants also pointed to the importance of vision when returning. Participants stressed the lack of a clear strategy and plan for keeping promising young people in Slovenia.

”

*He moved there when he was about 18 with a very large scholarship from Martha Graham and the dancers, but he never really came back to Slovenia. That is why we have many examples of very talented people, often in the arts and music, who find it very difficult to succeed abroad. And if they don't have some support and recognition from Slovenia, they say to themselves, why come back?*

“

# 3

## Občutki pozabljenosti oziroma izbrisanosti

---

Udeleženci naše raziskave so izpostavili, da obstaja močan občutek izbrisanosti, ko izseljenec odjavi davčno rezidenstvo v Sloveniji. Izguba zdravstvenega zavarovanja v državi rojstva je po njihovem mnenju najbolj opazna sprememba, ki povzroči občutek, da jih domovina ne sprejema. Razmišljali so o možnih rešitvah, kot so plačilo pavšalnega zneska ali vzpostavitev mehanizma za “začasno vrnjene” izseljence, ki bi olajšal določene postopke, ki so za rezidente samoumevni.

”

*Kako sem se jaz počutil, ko sem šel tujino? Sem se jaz počutil, da sem bil izbrisan, praktično. Seveda se moraš najprej odjaviti za... kot davčnega rezidenta, kar sem jasno to čakal dve leti. Ampak potem, jaz se spomnim sem šel na ta ZZZS odjaviti svoje zdravstveno zavarovanje in sem bil tako, kar malo sem se zjokal. Da izgubiš vse bonitete življenja v Sloveniji, zdravstvenega zavarovanja in kakršnekoli podpore samo zato, ker si hotel iti kariero eno stopničko više.*

“

# 3

## Feelings of being forgotten or erased

---

Participants pointed out that there is a strong sense of erasure once an expatriate has given up their tax residency in Slovenia. The loss of health insurance in their country of birth is the most noticeable change that makes them feel that they are not accepted in their home country. Possible solutions have been considered, such as paying a flat-rate amount or setting up a mechanism for “temporarily returned” expatriates to facilitate certain procedures that are taken for granted for residents.

”

*How did I feel when I went abroad? I felt that I was erased, practically. Of course, you first have to deregister as... tax resident, which I have clearly been waiting two years to do. But then, I remember I went to this Health Insurance Fund (ZZZS) to cancel my health insurance and I was like, I cried a little bit. To lose all the benefits of living in Slovenia, health insurance and any kind of support, just because you wanted to move up one step in your career.*

“

# 4

## Potrebe za določitev in komuniciranje vladnih prioritet

---

Udeležencem se zdi izjemnega pomena, da razumejo prednostne naloge za Slovenijo, tako na ravni diplomatskih prizadevanj, odnosa do diaspor kot tudi prednostnih znanstvenih in družbeno-političnih izzivov.

”

*Veste, kot strateg in oportunist resnično iščem priložnosti, ko grem v Slovenijo, se srečam s ključnimi ljudmi, z ministrom, s Slovenci v zamejstvu in tako naprej, in moje vprašanje je, katere so vaše prioritete za naš del Kanade.*

“

# 4

## The need to identify and communicate government priorities

---

Participants found it extremely important to understand what Slovenia's priorities are, both in terms of diplomatic efforts, relations with diasporas, and priority scientific and socio-political challenges.

”

*You know, as a strategist and an opportunist, I really look for opportunities when I go to Slovenia to meet with key people, the Minister, Slovenians abroad and so on, and my question is what are your priorities for our part of Canada.*

“

# 5

## Izzivi in priložnosti, povezane z znanjem slovenskega jezika

---

Udeleženci so izpostavili izzive, povezane z ohranjanjem in uporabo slovenskega jezika v profesionalnem okolju. Ta je pogosto vezana na prostovoljske pobude in napore.

”

*Zdaj smo ugotovili, da smo imeli v Torontu tečaje slovenskega jezika za ljudi, ki so rojeni v Kanadi in se želijo naučiti slovenščine, kot so študentje in nekateri odrasli. Po pandemiji pa zaradi omejitev nismo mogli izvajati tečajev v učilnici. Zato smo se vrnili, prišli do ideje o programu tutorstva in našli nekoga v Sloveniji, ki je bil pripravljen sodelovati. Jaz sem bil tu in sem novačil študente, on pa je bil tam in je novačil učitelje.*

“

Udeleženci so opozorili tudi na izginjanje poznavanja slovenskega jezika.

”

*Da, Udeleženka 1, seveda je, še posebej zato, ker naslednja generacija postaja hitro asimilirana v angleško kulturo in izgublja svoje vezi in dediščino in izgubljajo svoj jezik, kar se mi zdi ključnega pomena, zlasti v Britanski Kolumbiji, kjer nas je vedno manj, zato moramo nekaj storiti precej odločno.*

“

## Challenges and opportunities related to Slovenian language skills

---

Participants highlighted the challenges related to the preservation and use of the Slovenian language in a professional environment. This is often linked to volunteer initiatives and efforts.

”

*Now we have found that we have had Slovenian language courses in Toronto for people who were born in Canada and want to learn Slovenian, such as students and some adults. After the pandemic, however, we were unable to run courses in the classroom due to restrictions. So we went back, came up with the idea of a tutoring programme and found someone in Slovenia, who was willing to participate. I was there recruiting students, he was there recruiting teachers.*

“

”

Participants also pointed to the disappearance of knowledge of the Slovenian language.

*Yes, Participant 1, of course it is, especially because the next generation is rapidly becoming assimilated into English culture and they are losing their ties and their heritage and they are losing their language, which I think is crucial, especially in British Columbia where there are fewer and fewer of us, so we need to do something very decisive.*

“

# 6

## Razlike med prvimi generacijami izseljencev in sedanji mladi generaciji

Sogovorniki so poudarili, da je bila prva generacija izseljencev precej bolj aktivna in da so v tistem času delovala slovenska združenja v ZDA in Kanadi, ki so uspešno povezovala kulturo in gospodarstvo ter ohranjala tesne vezi s Slovenijo. Pri sedanji mladi generaciji, še posebej pri tistih, ki so se rodili v ZDA ali Kanadi, manjka tovrstnih povezav, kar še posebej velja za mlade podjetnike, ki so se preselili v ZDA, predvsem v Kalifornijo, v iskanju novih poslovnih priložnosti. Izpostavljena je bila ideja, da bi se bolje organizirano povezovanje mladih v ZDA, vključno z gospodarskim povezovanjem, lahko izvajalo preko civilnodružbenih organizacij, kot je na primer Inštitut ASEF, namesto preko državnih agencij ali konzulatov, ki jih mladi večinoma ne poznajo.

”

*Po besedah kolegov, ki so na trgu intenzivno prisotni, ne najboljše. Po drugi strani morajo podjetniki za preboj na tujem trgu v vsakem primeru največ narediti sami. Zagotovo se pozna odsotnost slovenskih (gospodarskih) predstavništev na zahodni obali - zlasti v tehnoloških hubih prihodnostih - npr. San Francisco Bay Area in Silicijeva dolina*

“

# 6

## Differences between the first generations of expatriates and the current young generation

The participants stressed that the first generation of expatriates was much more active and that at that time there were Slovenian associations in the USA and Canada, which successfully linked culture and economy and maintained close ties with Slovenia. The current young generation, especially those born in the US or Canada, lacks such connections, and this is especially true for young entrepreneurs who have moved to the US, especially California, in search of new business opportunities. The idea was put forward that better organised networking of young people in the US, including economic networking, could be done through civil society organisations such as the ASEF Institute, rather than through government agencies or consulates, which are largely unknown to young people.

”

*Not very well, according to my colleagues who are very present on the market. On the other hand, entrepreneurs have to do most of the work themselves to break into a foreign market. The absence of Slovenian (economic) representations on the West Coast is certainly noticeable - especially in the technology hubs of the future - e.g. the San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley.*

“

# 7

## Izzivi pri vzpostavljanju sodelovanj gospodarstvenikov

---

Fokusna skupina z gospodarstveniki je razkrila, da določen delež udeležencev že sodeluje z različnimi organizacijami za promocijo Slovenije. Tisti, ki pa še niso vključeni, so pripravljene na sodelovanje, vendar se običajno soočajo s težavo, da ne vedo, na koga naj se obrnejo. Presenetljivo je bilo ugotoviti, da v gospodarskem sektorju skoraj nihče ne pozna instrumenta poslovnih klubov prek agencije SPIRIT, niti poslovnega kluba v Clevelandu. Prav tako je popolna nevednost prisotna glede orodij Slovenskega podjetniškega sklada, ki omogoča finančno podporo za vstop na tuje trge, kot so ZDA.

”

*Poznam program AmCham ter ABC pospeševalnik in ASEF. Mogoče bi bilo celo lažje, recimo da nevladna ustanova kot je ASEF, prevzame koordinacijo nad neko tako aktivnost, kot pa nek konzulat.*

“

# 7

## Challenges in setting up business partnerships

---

The focus group with business people revealed that a certain proportion of participants already work with various organisations to promote Slovenia. Those who are not yet involved are ready to participate, but usually face the problem of not knowing where to turn. It was surprising to find that almost no one in the business sector is familiar with the instrument of business clubs through the SPIRIT agency, nor with the Cleveland Business Club. There is also complete lack of knowledge about the tools of the Slovenian Enterprise Fund, which provides financial support for entering foreign markets such as the US.

”

*I am familiar with the AmCham programme and the ABC Accelerator and ASEF. It might even be easier, say, for an NGO like ASEF to take over the coordination of an activity like this than for a consulate*

“

# 8

## Interesi po vzpostavitvi digitalne platforme za povezovanje Slovencev v tujini

---

Udeleženci so predlagali razvoj centralizirane podatkovne baze ali spletnega portala, ki bi pomagal povezati slovenske znanstvenike, ki živijo v tujini, med seboj in z znanstveniki v Sloveniji ter tako olajšal sodelovanje in izmenjavo informacij.

”

*No, Udeleženec 2, dejansko imamo nekakšen sistem napotitev in mislim, da bi bilo najbolje, če bi slovenska vlada imela spletno stran, kot je bilo omenjeno, kjer bi lahko navedla, veš, umetnike ali kogarkoli, kontaktne podatke in kaj ti ljudje delajo in kaj iščejo.*

“

”

*No, Udeleženec 2, dejansko imamo nekakšen sistem napotitev in mislim, da bi bilo najbolje, če bi slovenska vlada imela spletno stran, kot je bilo omenjeno, kjer bi lahko navedla, veš, umetnike ali kogarkoli, kontaktne podatke in kaj ti ljudje delajo in kaj iščejo.*

“

## Interest in establishing a digital platform for connecting Slovenians abroad

---

Participants suggested the development of a centralised database or web portal that would help to connect Slovenian scientists living abroad with each other and with scientists in Slovenia, thus facilitating cooperation and the exchange of information.

”

*the government should provide the infrastructure, you know, and we should drive these 'cars' [use the portal and take advantage of the opportunities*

“

”

*Well, Participant 2, we actually have a kind of referral system and I think it would be best if the Slovenian government had a website, as has been mentioned, where they could list, you know, artists or whoever, contact details and what these people are doing and what they are looking for.*

“

