

## Widening Country Success Story

“Start early both writing and actively communicating with the host.”

**Name of the fellow:** Katja Džepina  
**Country of the host:** Slovenia  
**Project Acronym:** SAAERO  
**Project start and end date:** 1.01.2022-31.12.2023  
**Type of MSCA, Horizon 2020:** Individual Fellowship

### What is your project about and why is the topic important for science advancement?

The aim of SAAERO project was understanding the mechanisms and effects of the air pollution in Southeast Europe. Namely, countries of Southeast Europe regularly experience poor air quality during cold, winter months. Our focus was the city of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as an example of urban area in Southeast Europe. Determining the sources of air pollution and its effects on the human health in Sarajevo has the power to prevent future air pollution and save human lives.

### Why is your project important for society?

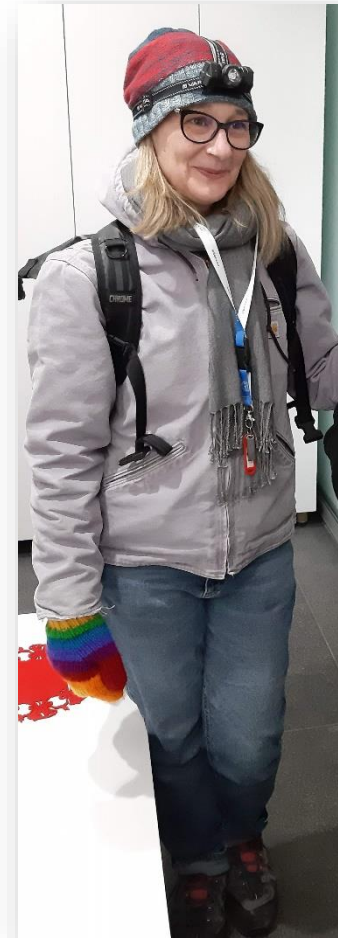
Detrimental effects of air pollution on the environment and human health are well documented and while numerous measurement campaigns have been undertaken in the urban centres of the developed countries, this was the first time such campaign was done in Sarajevo. Field measurements campaign was set up and performed in close collaboration with local institutions, and our supersite was at the headquarters of the Federal Hydrometeorological Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### What communication and public engagement measures have you foreseen?

During the SAAERO campaign, we also wanted to showcase the power of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and bring Sarajevo's academic community together. Therefore, we organised a two-day MSCA Infoday workshop with the participation of three NCPs - from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia.

### Why did you choose a widening country as a host?

Slovenia was chosen as a host country due to previous collaborative research. Similarly, the focus of the research was the air pollution in the Western Balkans and conducting the research with a host in a geographical vicinity was very convenient. It also gave us the unique opportunity to compare the air quality in the urban centres of EU Member States (Ljubljana, Slovenia and Zagreb, Croatia) with non-EU ones (Sarajevo, Bosnia and



Herzegovina and Belgrade, Serbia). Namely, collaborating with local and Swiss researches, we extended the SAAERO project and included air pollutants measurements beyond Sarajevo, enabling the first direct comparison of those capitals.

supported this project every step of the way and gave point-by-point detailed review of the draft.

## What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?

Excellent science is crucial for the successful MSCA application, albeit it is only a part of this application. My advice is to start early both writing and actively communicating with the host. Similarly, MSCA National Contact Points in each country are the most experienced and

up-to-date persons, making their help and advice invaluable.

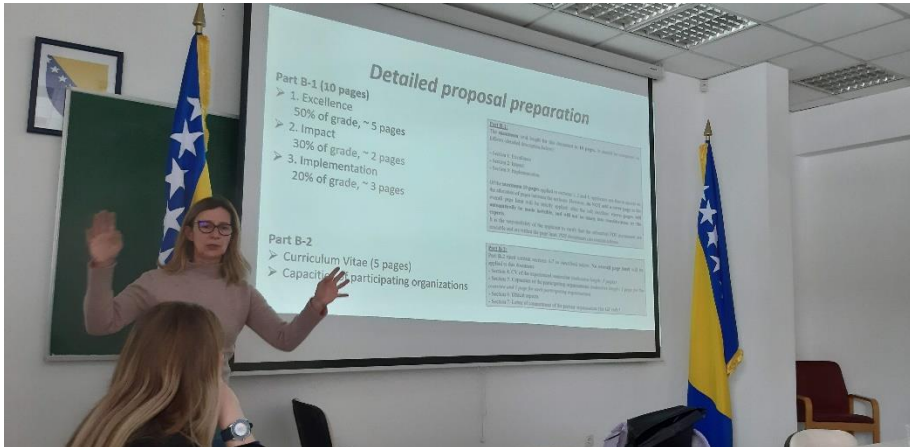
More information on the project:



The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) support researchers at all stage of their career across all disciplines. The MSCA also support cooperation between industry and academia and provide innovative trainings and career developments.

The MSCA Individual Fellowships (IF) provide opportunities to researchers of any nationality to acquire and transfer new knowledge and to work on research and innovation in Europe and beyond.

The MSCA-NET project is the MSCA NCP project to facilitate the transnational cooperation to achieve a consistent and harmonised level of NCP support. The scientific community can also profit from our project to support their MSCA application.



## How did you find your host organisation?

The fellow previously collaborated with the host supervisor Griša Močnik so it was a natural choice to choose him and the University of Nova Gorica as a host organisation.

## What kind of support did you get?

Successful funding of the SAAERO project is a story of perseverance, as it took several years of research and an unsuccessful application! The first application that did not receive funding was strongly supported by officers in the Research and Technology Transfer EU-Office of the Johannes Gutenberg University (JGU) in Mainz, Germany. While this application did not get funded, the advice and knowledge gained from working with JGU officers were invaluable in the next application, primarily as I gained true understanding of the Guide for Applicants for Individual Fellowships. During the second, successful submission of the SAAERO proposal, the most important assistance was from Slovenia's National Contact Point who