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The Emergence of the Idea for World Bee Day on 20 May

I came up with the idea on 15 September 2014 at about 6:30 a.m. while listening to the radio on the way to work at the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association. The radio was broadcasting a programme on World Days and their meaning and that is when it hit me: Why don't bees have their own World Day, considering that every third spoonful of the world's food relies on bees and other pollinators, and that bees are increasingly endangered and can almost no longer survive without the help of people? It would only be right for the global public to realise once a year that there is no life without bees ... And that it is necessary to create the conditions that will make it possible for bees to survive and carry out their mission!

Being a man of action who wants to realise every idea immediately, I communicated this idea via email to my presidential college and colleagues at the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association at 7:10 a.m. and suggested that we propose to the UN to declare World Bee Day on 20 May, when we celebrate the birth of the first teacher of modern beekeeping in the world, Anton Janša. May is also the month of active development of bees and nature in the Northern Hemisphere, whereas in the Southern Hemisphere it is autumn, when bee products and the fruit of bees' work (pollination) are harvested and the season of honey and honey products begins.



One of the milestones: unanimous support from Apimondia and the first presentation of the World Bee Day flag designed by Andrejka Čufer



The Mayor of Žirovnica, Leopold Pogačar, is a great supporter of the World Bee Day initiative. He was the first mayor of the Upper Carniola region to sign the document in its support (photo: Polona Kus, Slovenia)

But I was even more pleasantly surprised by the reaction of the Slovenian and foreign public. The Slovenian public immediately welcomed the idea with open arms and the World Bee Day project became a real movement.

The initiative convinced everybody, from the bodies of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia and Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovenian government, Mr Dejan Židan, MSc, all the important Slovenian politicians, the world beekeeping organisation Apimondia, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the EU, etc.

Truth be told, I did not imagine how demanding the process of declaring a World Day is, not even in my wildest dreams. Slovenian specialist services (at the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association and services of the state, starting with the services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food) which, following the example of bees, enthusiastically cooperated, proved that if the idea and the goal are right, it is possible to find a way to reach a goal that at first, seemed unattainable!

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The unforgettable welcome on returning from the Apimondia International Apicultural Congress 2015 in South Korea

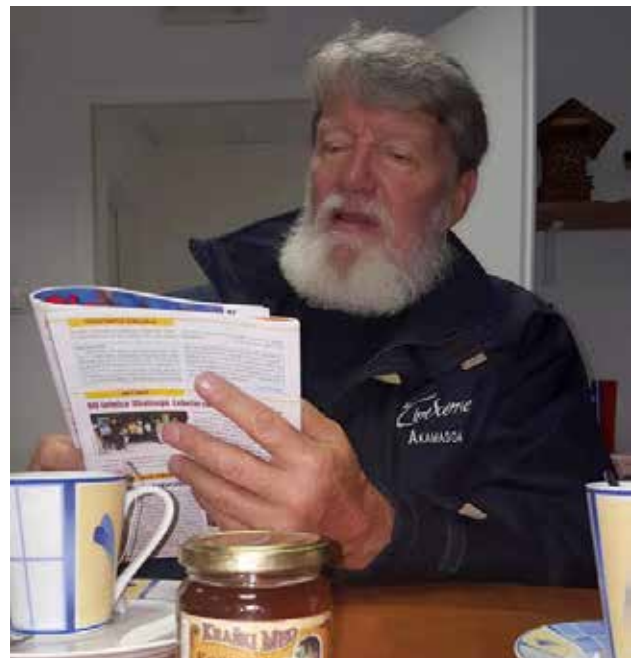
An even bigger surprise was the response of the political and general public around the world. Everybody agreed and vocally supported the proposal, but also added comments such as: "Finally a good proposal for a World Day", "How come there isn't one already?", "Why didn't we propose it?", "Bees deserve this day", "Congratulations to Slovenia on such an excellent proposal", etc.

At the initiative of Mr Pavel Zdešar, Slovenian beekeepers have celebrated our own beekeeping day on 20 May every year since 2003. In 2003, Mr Zdešar suggested that Apimondia declare a worldwide beekeeping celebration on that day during its congress in Ljubljana. Unfortunately, the suggestion was not acted on at the time.

The initiative for the proclamation of World Bee Day by the UN is a tremendous step forward because now, it will not only be a beekeeping celebration, but a day when the importance of bees will be celebrated all around the world by everyone who knows what bees are and realises that it is virtually impossible to imagine life without them.



Pavle Zdešar, the initiator of the Slovenian beekeeping day (photo: Polona Kus, Slovenia)



Missionary Father Pedro Opeka has also expressed his support for the World Bee Day project



Minister Dejan Židan, MSc, has supported the World Bee Day initiative from the very beginning. This photo was taken at the beginning of the project aimed at showing cooperation with beekeepers' societies and promoting and supporting 20 May as World Bee Day. The president of the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, Boštjan Noč, and his colleagues visited the offices of more than 200 beekeepers' societies with a special painted van in the winter 2015/2016 (photo: Peter Kozmus).

Anton Janša had a nice saying: "Do as bees do!" May Slovenia and the world make bees their role models. The main purpose of World Bee Day is to make the **world aware that we need bees and that it is necessary to create the conditions that will enable them to survive!**



Illustration: Andrejka Čufer, Slovenia