SMASH Project at the University of Nova Gorica Welcomes 18 Postdoc Fellows who Decided to do Research in Slovenia: International, Interdisciplinary, and Inter-Sectoral Mobility of Postdoctoral Researchers Will Empower the Slovenian Research Environment.

Vipava – 4 March 2024 – The groundbreaking SMASH project proudly announces the results of its second call for postdoctoral researchers. The SMASH project embarks on a new phase, welcoming 18 outstanding postdoc fellows from abroad to join Slovenia's leading five research institutions.

The SMASH project, an **innovative, inter-disciplinary career-development training program**, is dedicated to bring to Slovenia outstanding postdoctoral researchers from around the globe. Centred on developing cutting-edge machine learning applications for science and humanities, SMASH bridges five top-level institutions in Slovenia: **the University of Nova Gorica, University of Ljubljana, Jožef Stefan Institute, Institute of Information Science (IZUM), and the governmental Slovenian Environment Agency (ARSO).** Alongside its 25 associated partners, including the most innovative Slovenian businesses and prestigious academic institutions worldwide, SMASH is the first EU COFUND project coordinated by a Slovenian organization – the University of Nova Gorica. SMASH funds individual advanced research fellowships, including training and career development, **offering 50 selected fellows a 2-year fellowship at one of Slovenia's leading research institutions**. Additionally, fellows have the opportunity for two secondments, one in Slovenia and another internationally, among SMASH associate partners, emphasizing the program's interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach.

The second call closed in October 2023 and attracted 37 applications, highlighting the project's appeal across various research areas. The most sought-after fields were Data Science (13 applications), Fundamental Physics (10 applications), and Climate and Linguistics (5 applicants each), reflecting a similar interest distribution among the selected fellows.

Host Institutions, notably the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Computer and Information Science (UL FRI) and the University of Nova Gorica (UNG), saw the highest number of applications, with successful fellows set to be hired across the University of Ljubljana, University of Nova Gorica, Jožef Štefan Institute and ARSO. This competitive selection underscores Slovenia's position as a hub for academic excellence and collaborative research. The SMASH project's global appeal was evident in the diverse geographical coverage of applicants, **with 17 from European countries and 20 from non-EU countries, demonstrating its worldwide reach and the universal relevance of its research focus**. The female-to-male ratio among applicants and selected fellows was 45% and showcases the project's commitment to gender equity (project target is 40%) and the effectiveness of its anonymized application review process in promoting fairness.

Prof. Dr. Gabrijela Zaharijaš, astrophysicist and head of the SMASH project, shared her enthusiasm: *"We are delighted with the call, both with the numbers of applications and their geographical and gender coverage. We eagerly anticipate welcoming the Fellows to our host Institutions in Slovenia and embarking on the exciting new phase of SMASH ahead."*
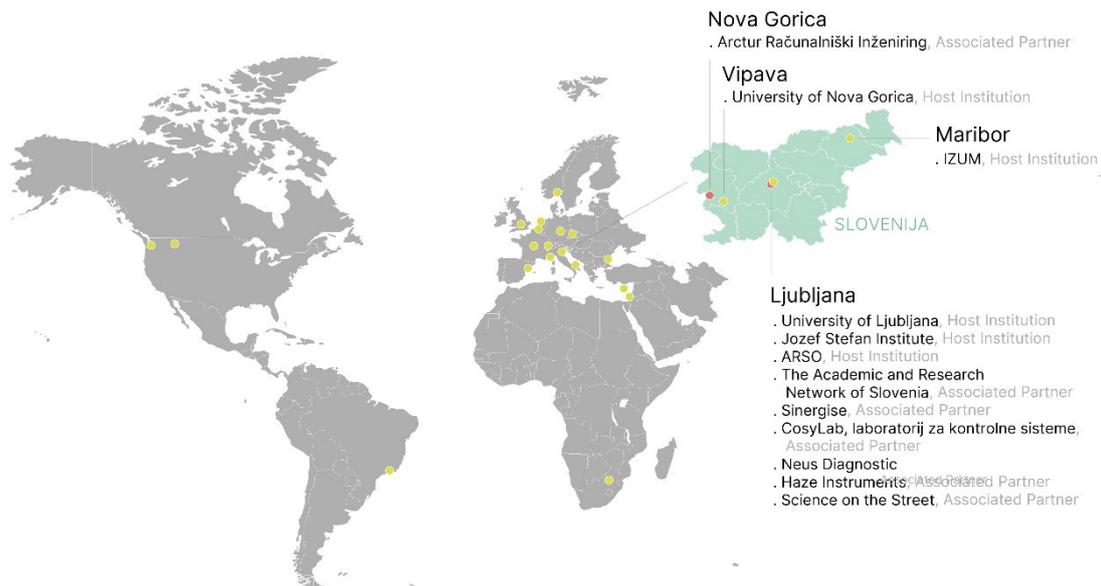
University *of Ljubljana*

For more information about SMASH and its ongoing initiatives: Please visit SMASH Project Website.

About SMASH: SMASH is an intersectoral career development training program for postdoctoral researchers, committed to advancing cutting-edge machine learning applications for science and humanities. Developed by a consortium of top-level institutions in Slovenia, SMASH is the first COFUND project coordinated by the University of Nova Gorica and is co-financed by the European Horizon research and development program. The goal of the project is to attract 50 excellent postdoctoral researchers from all over the world in the next five years, of which at least 50 % are female researchers,. The SMASH program focuses on five main research areas: 1.) Data Science - Machine Learning for Scientific Applications; 2.) Fundamental Physics - Machine learning for Particle Physics, Astrophysics and Cosmology; 3.) Linguistics - Computing for Human and Animal Communication; 4.) Climate – Machine Learning in Climate Research; 5.) Precision Medicine - Personalised Medicine and Life Sciences.

Key contacts for the project SMASH:

Prof. Dr. Gabrijela Zaharijas, Coordinator of the SMASH program, Director of the doctoral study program Physics at UNG and researcher at the Center for Astrophysics and Cosmology at UNG: gzaharijas@ung.si, web site

Nova Gorica
. Arctur Računalniški Inženiring, Associated Partner

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. University of Nova Gorica, Host Institution

Maribor
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