



**WE ARE TURNING
CHALLENGES
INTO SUCCESSES**
2022 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

RK CELJE
PIVOVARNA LAŠKO

“There Is No One Like Us!”

Official song of the Celje Pivovarna Laško Handball Club Performed by Šank Rock



There is no one like us, Celje,
Celje will be the champion,
there is no one like us, Celje,
Celje will be the champion.
There is no one like us,
Celje will be the champion,
there is no one like us... oooooooooo.

Life is better with handball,
may Zlatorog make our world go round.
Hey, the people of Celje are never alone,
The loyal Florijani fans are always
right there by your side.

There is no one like us, Celje,
Celje will be the champion,
there is no one like us, Celje,
Celje will be the champion.
There is no one like us,
Celje will be the champion,
there is no one like us... oooooooooo.

Laško beer for a good, strong voice,
hey heroes, you can count on us.
Yellow for courage and blue for pride,
show us a club who could rival us.

There is no one like us, Celje,
Celje will be the champion,
there is no one like us, Celje,
Celje will be the champion.
There is no one like us,
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SUSTAIN ABILITY



Vision and philosophy

In recent years, sustainability has become a priority for many business organisations, sometimes because of public opinion, sometimes because of the benefits it brings, or simply because it represents the right direction for the organisation's development. Many organisations have realised how interconnected society is, and that the economic system is shaped and depends entirely on the natural system of ecosystem services.

The COVID-19 crisis has caused the most far-reaching public health consequences that the world has faced for a long time. The impact of the crisis on business and the sports industry has demonstrated quite clearly the central role that sustainability plays in ensuring business resilience. Organisations that had already strategically integrated sustainability and transparency into their business before the pandemic have paid even more attention to it during the crisis. Importantly, they have been able to react with much greater flexibility to unexpected events. At the Celje Pivovarna Laško Handball Club (referred in the following to as "RK CPL"), we know this for a fact, as our faith in day-to-day sustainability has proven to be well-founded, especially in terms of health, safety and well-being. These aspects have taken an even more central role in ensuring the resilience and sustainability of our sporting activities and the community in which we operate.

Sustainability has become as much a part of our daily activities and discussions as it has ever been before. At the same time, we have shown through our initiative and leadership that the pandemic can only be defeated together – in cooperation with all the players from the first team and youth ranks, and with fans, sponsors, the local community and loyal partners.



Consequently if sustainability evolves in line with social developments, the vision and quality of sustainable development are likely to change (as humanity evolves) and move in a direction that is impossible to predict today. The COVID-19 crisis is again a good example: from social inclusion to the transition to a green economy, from greater transparency to environmental care, all these dimensions of sustainability have taken a more prominent place in the last year and a half.

After all, changes in the physical world are caused by changes in human mentality and consciousness. At RK CPL, we are pleased that we embarked on the path of sustainability a few years ago, allowing us to be one step ahead of the general debate on sustainability today, while at the same time reaping the first rewards.

It also allowed us to build up the resilience that came in handy during the pandemic. But sustainability in this sense is a continuous process of progress towards positive results, determined by people's beliefs, desires, knowledge and experience. The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated these trends, with organisations such as RK CPL that have embedded these values and attributes into their operations demonstrating greater resilience than those taking a more traditional approach.

For us, sustainability is an opportunity to deliver more value in the community and to generate potential profitability by identifying inefficiencies in our business, addressing reputational issues and better positioning ourselves vis-à-vis our stakeholders and the handball community.





Sport is about **cooperation**. Sport brings individuals, communities and countries together, often overcoming cultural, ethnic and national differences. However, the sports sector is not immune to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The threat of the virus, together with the restrictions imposed worldwide to contain its spread, have had a negative impact on both youth and elite sport and the related sectors, such as tourism and entertainment. Open spaces, restaurants and sports facilities had to be closed to contain the virus.

People had to stay at home and avoid social contact, companies had to reduce working hours or lay off employees. The negative consequences have been felt by professional sports leagues, major domestic and international sporting events, amateur training, fitness providers, sports equipment manufacturers, etc. For us, this initially meant implementing a very rigorous operational plan to monitor the health of players and staff and to work towards wellbeing in the local environment in the ways detailed in this report.

The sports sector is among those hardest hit by the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. The decline in the global economy may affect this market further, despite the public funding provided by the government through epidemic-mitigation packages. A proactive approach to sustainability means a holistic approach to all the activities the club carries out.

At RK CPL, we create value through our players, the expertise of our coaches, our infrastructure, our human capital, our fans, our partners and sponsors, and, last but not least, through effective reporting on our operations.

Competitiveness is essential to the club's development in the environment that it operates in, helping to meet the expectations of stakeholders and to work with them.

The pandemic has left all sports organisations facing different challenges, e.g. increased interdependence, hidden vulnerabilities and health and safety risks for employees and consumers. The pandemic has exacerbated existing social inequalities and brought them to the forefront of public attention, prompting companies to rethink their corporate strategies for the future and the effectiveness and sustainability of their current business models.

In sports organisations, the pandemic has revived the debate on corporate social responsibility and is accelerating the creation of new conditions for the sustainable development of the business. The club is well aware of the social responsibility imposed on it by the consequences of its actions and is therefore firmly committed to upholding corporate social responsibility in its philosophy. It wishes to maintain its image as a responsible actor at the national and international level and therefore to consolidate its leading position in handball on and off the court.

Transparent business is key to fostering a culture of trust among leaders and their stakeholders. When managers work transparently, problems are solved faster. At the same time, a culture where transparency is valued in the workplace promotes highly motivated employees and stakeholders in general, which translates into better and stronger relationships in the communities where the organisation operates and more opportunities for implementing innovative solutions.

Key messages related to resilience and sustainability include:

— **AWARENESS:** acting on credible and reliable information.

— **CONDUCT:** communicating with and educating people connected with the club.

— **CULTURE:** having a plan and being ready to respond.

— **CONDUCT IN PRACTICE:** protecting employees, supply chains, customers and the public.

In short, sustainability means different things to different people. For us at RK CPL it means not only the ability to innovate as part of our ongoing efforts towards open collaboration and dialogue, but also that the leadership enables us to build our resilience in difficult and challenging times, whilst simultaneously preserving the club's tradition of educating and developing young players. At the same time, sustainability also means open dialogue with stakeholders, ongoing engagement with the local community and deeper identification with the area in which we operate. This aim here is not just to highlight the seriousness with which we approach and report on sustainability in all its aspects, but also to present to the stakeholders of RK CPL the various activities that positively impact the areas of mutual importance. To this end, the club has decided to publish the report in both Slovene and English. In the event of misunderstandings or ambiguities, the Slovene version shall prevail.

Report structure

This Sustainability Report is an update to the previous report, which was the first of its kind to be published by any handball club that is a member of the Handball Federation of Slovenia.

This document reiterates that Celje Pivovarna Laško Handball Club considers sustainability to be an integral part of its activities, in accordance with the club's cooperation with its stakeholders.

But true sustainability goes well beyond individual projects. It is about closely monitoring our behaviour as an organisation, the way we interact with society as a whole and ensuring that appropriate governance structures, policies and processes are in place to deliver long-term benefits for the organisation, society and the environment. In other words, this document provides a consolidated overview of the club's achievements, as part of its regular reporting on our sustainability efforts. Like the previous report, this one is intended for fans, employees, partners and all stakeholders, as well as NGOs, organisations and representatives of society and the business world who want to achieve greater prominence for sustainability in sport.

Our vision of sustainability has enabled us to successfully tackle the crisis of the pandemic. We are not only creating an ever-better environment in which young athletes can thrive, which is the hallmark of RK CPL, we are also building on our vision of sustainability, which has enabled us to tackle and manage the COVID-19 crisis.

In line with the requirements of a sustainability report, we have opted for a traditional report structure. Accordingly, the club has laid out the essential contents – corporate social responsibility, local environment and youth team development – that are a constant feature of our activities. As we want to make public the full range of activities of RK CPL and thus highlight general importance of the role that the club plays in society, we have deliberately not pre-selected or limited the content.

The content is based on conversations and discussions with the staff responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of the club. Essentiality is the key by which the club determines the relevance of the problems it needs to address and report on. The actions we have taken to shape this process range from what the club has done in terms of sustainability to identifying key themes for the RK CPL; from dialogue with internal stakeholders to a wide range of activities to engage with external stakeholders.



Note on methodology

The foundation of a sustainability report is laid by an organisation identifying and prioritising its impact on the economy, the environment and people, in order to provide a clear view of the consequences. Like the previous report, this report follows the guidelines and Standards of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), which presents best global practices for public reporting on various economic, environmental and social impacts.

The Sustainability Report, based on GRI Standards, provides information on the organisation's sustainability efforts. The GRI Standards are a modular system of interlinked standards. They allow organisations to publicly report on the impact of their activities in a structured way that is transparent to stakeholders and other interested parties. They have a modular and coherent structure and are mainly used as a set of rules for the preparation of sustainability reports, highlighting essential contents.

A report prepared according to GRI Standards provides a holistic picture of the organisation's key activities, their associated impacts and how they are managed.

The GRI Standards are a modular system consisting of three categories: the GRI Universal Standards, the GRI Industry Standards and the GRI Thematic Standards. Each one provides a detailed explanation of how to use it at the start.

The GRI Universal Standards apply to all organisations, and for this report we have used GRI Standard 2 – General Disclosures 2021 (GRI 2), which includes disclosures on the organisation's structure and reporting practices, activities and workforce, governance, strategy, policies, practices and stakeholder engagement. These provide insights into the profile and size of the organisation and help provide context for understanding the organisation's impacts.

Following the principles of GRI Standard 2 – General Disclosures, we provide contextualised information on the organisation's profile, strategy, ethics and integrity, governance, stakeholder engagement practices and reporting processes. GRI 2 disclosures provide important contextualised information about an organisation to help stakeholders understand the nature of the organisation and its economic, environmental and social impacts.

Rokometni klub Celje Pivovarna Laško (RK CPL) is the official name of the organisation that is the subject of this report. Although the formal name identifies and defines the legal entity that is the “club”, the terms “handball team”, “club” and “organisation” are used synonymously in the report. The purpose of this Sustainability Report is to explain RK CPL's engagement with and accountability to its stakeholders and to illustrate that the Board has taken a structured approach to these activities during the period covered by the report. The information provided has not been subject to external evaluation, except for the certificates in the Annex, which have been externally validated.

For questions or comments regarding this document, please contact the club by email at info@rk-celje.si.



Introductory message from the Club President RK Celje Pivovarna Laško Gregor Planteu

Sustainability has become an important part of all aspects of our lives, especially because of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Businesses and organisations are increasingly valued on criteria beyond their ability to maximise profits, and only the most innovative and resilient will be able to withstand all the difficulties associated with the transformation necessitated by COVID-19.

When it comes to sustainability, no modern sports organisation can ignore its impact on the social fabric in which it operates, as all sport, including recreation and physical education, is an integral part of society. The relationship between sport and sustainability has become much more important. Sustainability is not the same as ethics, because it is not about short-term goals, and it has different meanings for different people and different organisations. Sustainability is best viewed as a medium - to long-term positive lever that can make an organisation or business stronger. In the case of sports organisations such as RK CPL, sustainability not only affects their image and reputation, but also their business, increasing its transparency, setting higher benchmarks and providing strategic guidance to help develop the club. During the restrictions imposed to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic, we at RK CPL have never stopped promoting responsible and healthy behaviour, while also doing our best on the court. The leadership of RK Celje Pivovarna Laško on and off the court has proved crucial in finding a way through this difficult period. From this perspective, the core purpose of sustainable development must be understood as long-term resilience.

The organisations that demonstrate resilience and withstand shocks are those that are closely associated with healthy economic, social and environmental systems. All these aspects are emphasized herein this sustainability report, which once again demonstrates our ability to innovate and opening new opportunities while maintaining the strength to achieve excellence sports results. We decided to update our first sustainability report and with this stakeholder to show our progress and restore high standards throughout the sports community. I hope you enjoy the report and support our efforts by commenting and sharing the report in your communities.

Gregor Planteu



Letter from Bojan Šrot, Mayor of the Municipality of Celje

In the world of sport, there are many organisations, large and small, that are already actively involved in specific areas of sustainability. Their sustainability efforts can be defined as green initiatives that put the environment first and social responsibility projects that support noble causes in wider communities. Sustainable organisations deliver good results for the environment and communities. But true sustainability means much more than individual projects. That is why the Celje Pivovarna Laško Handball Club (RK CPL), during this period of epidemic when our lives and sport have faced major challenges, has taken a thorough and proactive approach to making sustainability a way of working. In line with its role at local level and its reputation at national level, the club has, during the difficult months of the pandemic and otherwise, sought to find a different and better way of carrying out its activities, trying to understand, take responsibility for and learn from the consequences of its decisions.

Sport is a global passion. With its many and varied industries, it inspires and delights billions of people around the world. The shared values of each sporting community are a solid foundation for mutual understanding, cooperation and peace. The most important issue is ultimately one of values, and sport, with its profound impact on society and people, must uphold the noblest values.

RK CPL has by no means stood idly by during the epidemic, unaffected and far away from the changes that our society has had to face and is still facing. This report clearly illustrates the efforts, work and energy that the club's management, players, sponsors and others have put into overcoming the difficult months of the epidemic, without losing sight of the sporting spirit.

I am sure that, like me, you will find useful and interesting information in the report.

Bojan Šrot



Letter from Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia

Sustainable care for the planet is a project in which we all have to work together and make every effort to succeed in.

Athletes understand that success does not come without hard work, mutual support and team spirit. They inspire us as individuals and bind us together as a community through their outstanding personal traits.

People like to be inspired by sporting heroes and heroines, so I think it is great that the Celje Handball Club has made sustainable development a strategic commitment for its current and future activities, and has invited all its athletes, from the youngest to the most experienced, to do the same.

Setting an example is an extremely important driver of change, and inspiration is the most powerful force. Knowing that athletes are working together with us for sustainable development, for the future of our society and our planet acts as particularly bright beacon for others to follow.

The members of my Standing Committee for Climate Policy and I are trying to encourage decision-makers to embrace sustainable development and all people to understand and embrace it as an opportunity – for a different kind of growth, for a better society, for the future.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals address all the challenges of our world, from health and well-being to climate action, from ending poverty and hunger to high-quality education and reducing inequalities of all kinds.

There is still a lot of serious work to be done and I firmly believe that the best motivation can come from those most noble qualities shared by athletes: determination to succeed, perseverance and cooperation.

I wholeheartedly applaud the courage and ambition of the Celje Handball Club to become the champion among Slovenian sports clubs in the field of sustainable development. I believe that the club's efforts will inspire others and thus contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Slovenia and the world.

One of the first visible successes could be a sporting event that is free of single-use plastic. We have already stopped using single-use plastics in the Presidential Palace, and I am very proud of that.

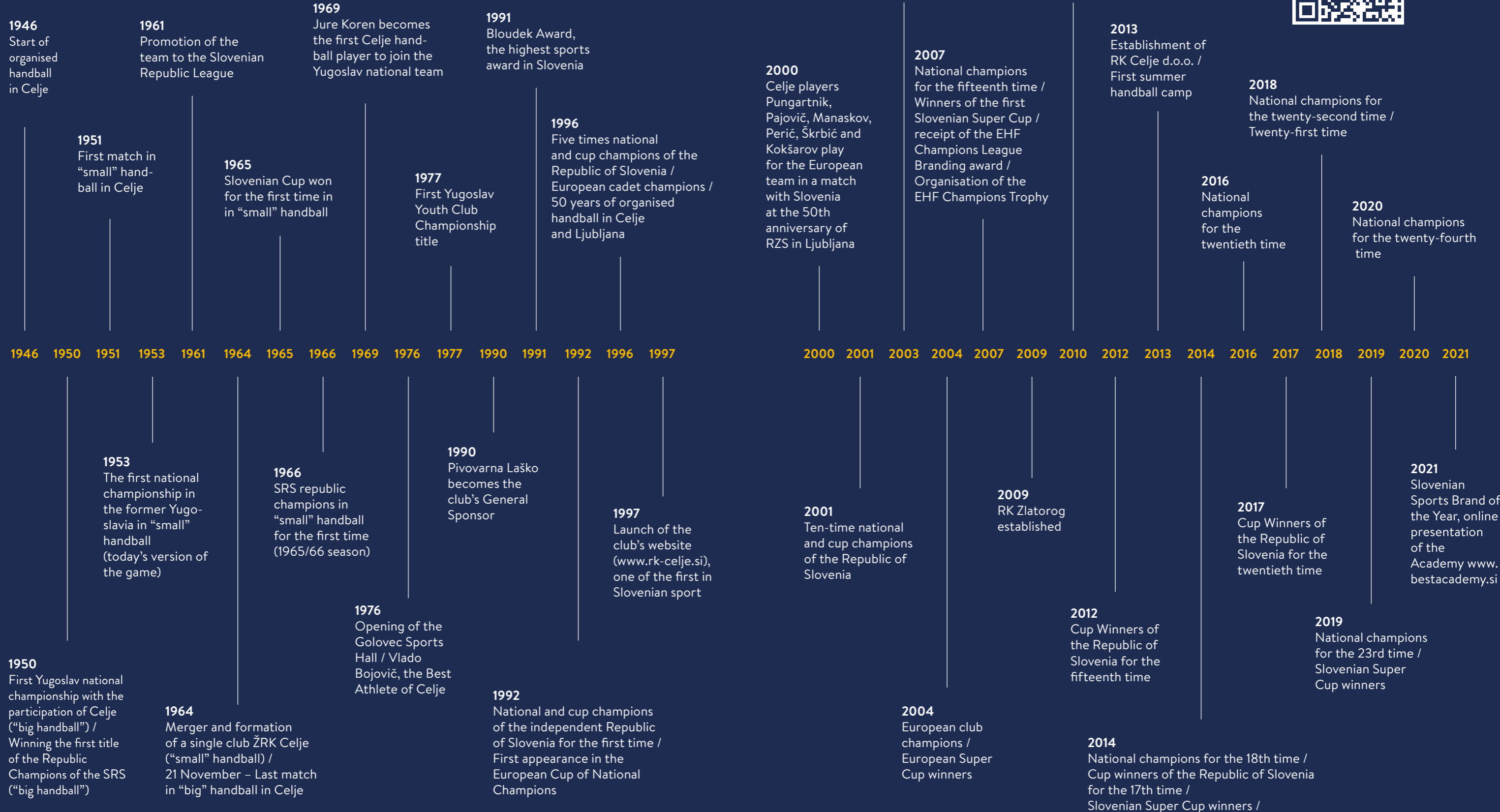
I wish you every success, perseverance and inspiration on your journey.

Borut Pahor

President of the Republic of Slovenia



The club through history



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Celje Handball Academy among the best in Europe

A state-of-the-art sports academy, qualified coaches and a modern training centre allow us to provide the best conditions for players to train and reach the top of the game. Over the years, we have developed a remarkable number of top handball players, athletes and personalities.

The Celje Handball Academy is becoming more and more appealing to young handball talents from other Slovenian clubs as well as from foreign countries, who are more and more often choosing to join our academy. Last season, the club received a special award from the European Handball Federation.

The Celje club was ranked right at the top of the list of the ten best and suitable handball centres, the ones that produce the greatest number of future handball superstars or players who can play at the highest-quality level. As such, our club has become the best handball academy in Europe.

We have been recognised by the European Handball Federation as the best club in Europe when it comes to finding, raising and developing handball talent.

We offer young people all the conditions and support they need to work hard and make it to the first team. Experienced sports professionals from a variety of disciplines help them on their way to achieving their dreams. This allows them to progress, first by internalising good sporting values, and later by focusing on winning.

Through various programmes we help young people to:

- develop sports skills
- physical fitness
- financial literacy
- public speaking
- successfully completing their education

RK CPL as a handball club has a responsibility to ensure the progress of the first team and young players in the youth teams not only on the court, but also in terms of their personal and professional development.

The club's strategy for young players is to invest in their skills, growth and well-being. All this is based on the long-term view that a successful young player for the club is one who makes it all the way to the first team.

The club's mission is also to cultivate a sporting culture that promotes communication, interpersonal relations, teamwork and emotional support for young people. What's more, the club supports young people in developing their sporting careers, even if they leave for another club.

Since 1991, when we started to record the data, 63 players from the club's own youth ranks have managed to make it to the first team, where they have played an average of 4.2 seasons; 6 players have stayed for 10 or more seasons, and the longest a player has stayed at the club played is as long as 14 seasons.

We want to educate young talented players in all areas that are important for their success in sport and life.



Collaboration with the Danish Academy Oure

The RK CPL junior and cadet teams gained invaluable international experience during their visit to the renowned Danish academy Oure Efterskole, which had already visited Celje with a delegation of children once before in 2020, when this excellent cooperation started. The young players participated in a tournament with their Danish peers and, above all, learned about their way of education and thinking about sport.

The Celje Academy is thus broadening its horizons and acquiring knowledge that can be transferred to its home environment. The Oure Sports Academy includes not only handball players, but also many other athletes and cultural figures, who benefit from an exceptional education system. Both academies, Celje and Oure, are known as some of the best in Europe in terms of handball.

**SKOLERNE
I OURE**



The Slovene players were interested to learn about the Danish way of life and playing handball, which is very different from the Slovene way in some respects. Besides that, they were able to compare themselves with the best Danish teams. Both teams played four matches, where everyone got a chance to compare their way of playing.



Thanks to the hospitality, friendship and openness of our Danish partners, a small Slovene delegation went back to Denmark in December for a professional workshop, and in March 2022 a delegation of more than 130 young Danish athletes, handball players and an equally large delegation of football players arrived in Slovenia, further broadening the cooperation and its appeal to the wider social environment.





Parents as allies of young handball players



RK CPL is committed to developing relationships with players' parents, especially from a communication and organisational point of view.

The role of families is fundamental to the development of young athletes. The Sports-portal app also helps parents here, allowing them to be involved in tracking their child's progress and ensuring regular contact with the parents of the children in each team.

The aim of this involvement is for parents to be an active part of their children's handball development, becoming allies rather than competitors. We encourage parents to get involved by explaining the club's strategy and vision in detail.

At the club, we want to help children develop many good qualities and characteristics, not just to strive for good results.

We encourage them to:

- develop work habits
- foster good relationships and bonds of friendship
- become magnanimous in victory or defeat
- react in a controlled manner in conflict situations
- develop fighting spirit and perseverance
- develop a sense of belonging to the club.

We want them to be proud to be members of RK CPL and to behave accordingly on and off the court, and to be exemplary when fighting for and representing the club in matches.

We also pay close attention to parents' opinions and encourage them to be involved in their child's development by:

- being interested in their child's progress
- supporting them and standing by them
- not behaving like coaches in training and matches
- finding the right balance between too much pressure and disinterest
- trying to assess their children's abilities realistically
- understanding that winning is not the most important thing
- encouraging the whole team in matches and cheering them on in a sporting manner
- cheering them on in a sporting manner



From fun and exercise to first sporting successes

We are constantly developing and upgrading the Handball Academy. Currently, more than 150 children train in the club's youth teams (younger and older boys, cadets and juniors). In addition, minihandball is regularly practised in many primary schools.

There are more than 500 children and adolescents practising together in the club, which is very challenging in terms of organisation and implementation.



Children aged 6 to 10 are enrolled in the minihandball programme, which includes just a few elements of handball and focuses on combining education and fun. After the age of 11, a more structured approach to training and the game begins, and players are registered as members of RK CPL at the Handball Federation of Slovenia. Young players are shown how they can correctly identify and reach their potential and motivate themselves to achieve proper handball development as well as scholastic success. They are also given advice on the link between nutrition and health, which is extremely important for development.



For young people, we organise the **International Handball Camp at the seaside, where, in addition to training, there is also time to meet famous handball players.** Fun, handball and being active at the start of the holidays attracts young, gifted players, who get to know each other better both on and off the court. Coaches and players from the famous Celje Handball Academy share their knowledge with the future stars of Slovene handball.

Encouraging movement and learning about handball starts at the age of 6.

We also include disadvantaged children to join our activities, for whom the training and summer camps are free of charge. In this spirit, players often take part in **Goodwill Games organised by schools for children with special needs.** Socialising with players makes a positive impression on both the children and the players, as it fosters a sense of community.

With the support of our sponsor Mastercard, we help our secondary school students to succeed in school. Students received free access to the **advanced multimedia platform Razturi na maturi**, which brings together secondary school material in Slovene, English and mathematics. They can explore the secondary school curriculum in the form of videos, complete interactive exercises, listen to webinars and read the notes or ask for help from the online tutors. Thousands of students are already using the Razturi na maturi digital platform to help them cope with the challenges of school. It helps young athletes to successfully balance their sporting and school commitments.

With the help of Mastercard, we also organised four webinars for our students that aim to help them:

- better understand the Razturi na maturi platform
- understand the importance of finance and the knowledge related to it
- communicate and speak in public in the modern world
- on the topic of healthy diet and health care

In this way, with the help of our sponsors, we provide young athletes with even more facilities for their sporting development and personal growth, helping to put them on a better footing for a successful future.

We promote discipline, knowledge acquisition and sharing, and learning enhancement, and the platform is designed for athletes as well as for all other students.



Exercising from home during coronavirus

During the coronavirus pandemic, our club has also faced a particular challenge: how to ensure smooth communication and make sure that our athletes can train properly from home. **We have not given up, we have found appropriate solutions to help our players get through this period and benefit from the remote training period.**

The coaches have filmed 500 short, safe and simple gymnastic exercises. The constraints faced by the children, such as small space and choice of equipment, have been taken into account. The props chosen can be found in every home (a stick, steps, a ball, slides, elastic bands, etc.). They have prepared video recordings of physical training exercises, focusing on strength, flexibility, endurance and coordination, as well as other suitable exercises with handball content.

This approach has proven to be very effective, making it much easier for coaches to plan training sessions and to communicate information to their players. The video exercise booklet will continue to be expanded and will be used to supplement the regular indoor workouts as needed. In addition to the organised training sessions, we have also organised a number of additional **short online lectures for young people on a variety of topics, including healthy diet, safe use of social networks, oral hygiene, financial literacy for athletes and the importance of self-image in sport.** The pandemic has placed coaches, children and adolescents and their parents in a whole new context in terms of communication and forms of physical exercise. The club has tried to adapt to this as much as possible and, with the exemplary cooperation of the club's management and coaches, to establish a system of work that would have the greatest possible positive impact on the development of young players.

The remote training exercises were designed so effectively that they were recognised by the *SPORT* magazine, the main national professional journal



in the field of sport, published by the Faculty of Sport and the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations. Our contribution in the area of sports participation during the quarantine period is thus also available to other sports clubs and organisations. **With well-organised remote training sessions, it has been possible to maintain both the locomotor efficiency and the vital locomotor skills of the handball players.**

INNOVATION AND DIGITALISATION

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From empty stands to Sports Brand of the Year

2020 was the year of the pandemic, but it was also the year of recognition. **We received the prestigious SPORTO BRANDS award for Slovene Club Sports Brand of the Year 2020, which we are extremely proud of, as it recognises the excellence of the club's work in many areas.** At the same time, we are also grateful for the fact that the award reflects our strong cooperation with sponsors, supporters and fans.

SPORTO BRAND is the highest recognition for athletes and sports clubs in the region, and it is awarded based on brand strength surveys of representative samples of the general public. The survey takes into account various parameters of athletes and sports clubs: recognisability, excellence, satisfaction, performance, likability, fans, and more. It is a remarkable recognition, especially as it comes at a time when the whole world is battling a virus.

However, this was not our only SPORTO award, **we have also won an Outstanding Award in the rightsholder category.** The award is given in the field of outstanding work in support of brand sponsorship, the achievement of goals and the presentation of a club's unique identity. Who hasn't heard the slogan **Once for Celje, always for Celje?**

The awarding body undoubtedly also recognised our commitment to the sustainable development of the club and our various projects, such as the provision of a cashless sports hall and fan zones for Champions League matches, working with young people, leasing of the headquarters, renovation and upgrading of the online shop, upgrading of the social media work, the establishment of our own "TV" platform RKCPL.TV and many other outstanding projects such as "Become a Legendary Name of Zlatorog".

**2020 was the year of the virus,
but it was also the year of outstanding awards.**

The Presidency of the Handball Federation of Slovenia gave the Award for Excellence for the first time, and the recipient was RK CPL.

We are delighted to add this award to our trophy cabinet, especially as it recognises our many marketing campaigns, work with young people, results and the importance of the values of the whole club for Slovene club sport.



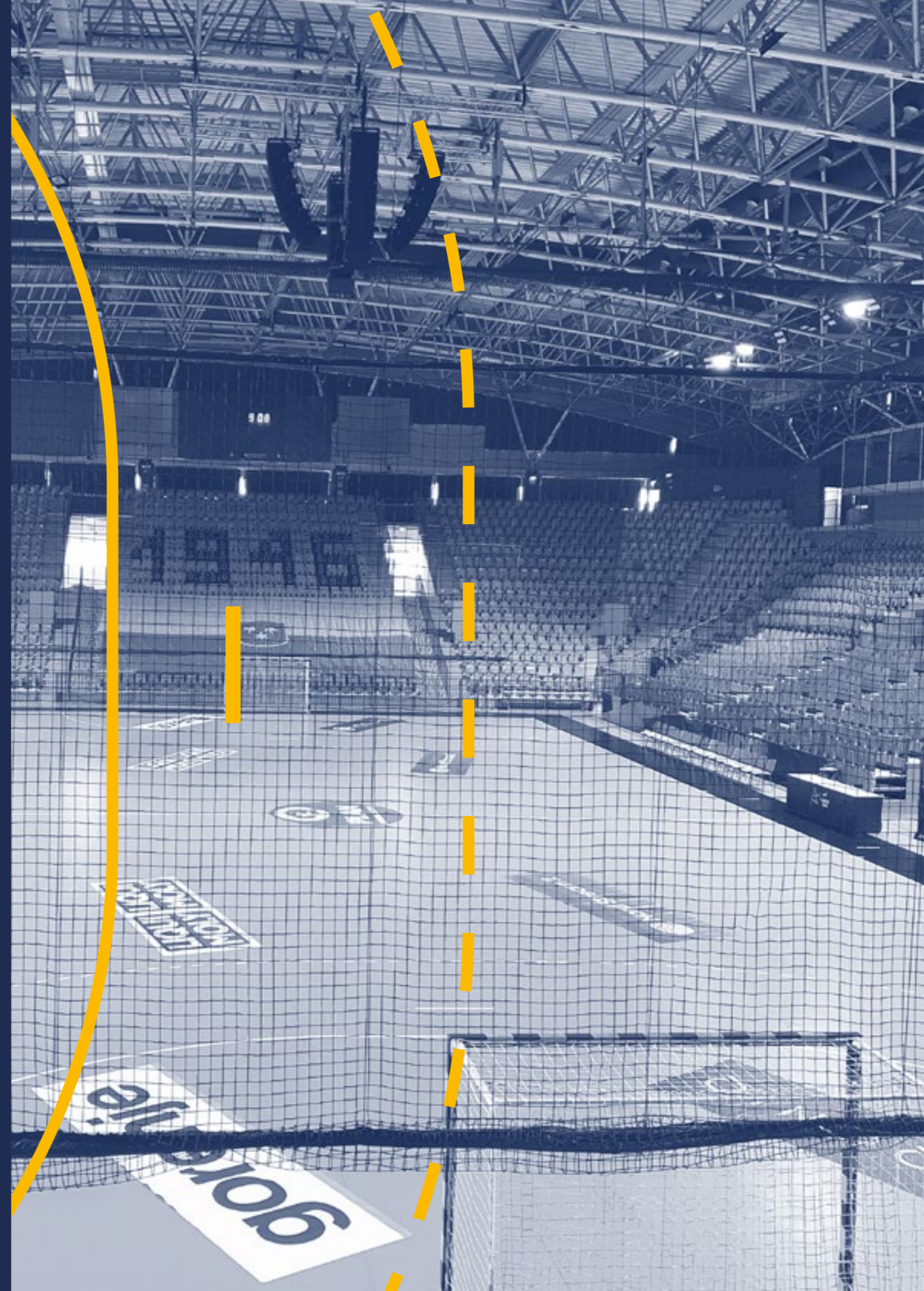
Zlatorog Arena has become a smart venue

New digital technologies are changing the world of the fan experience, especially with the introduction of new business models in ticketing, media use and sponsorships. **Better IT infrastructure has also been introduced at the Zlatorog Arena, which is becoming a smart venue – one of the areas where digital innovation has shown the greatest impact.**

The Zlatorog Arena is equipped to bring fans an immersive multimedia experience with an innovative digital video and content distribution system that controls and delivers targeted high-definition footage and relevant digital content to fans. A number of TV screens are installed in the arena, giving fans relevant information and a better experience of the match, from close-ups of warm-ups to pre-match social media posts and other real-time initiatives that build on the sense of community and create an open dialogue between the team and the fans.

We have also invested in replacing all the code readers at the entry control points, which now read QR codes, to make tickets usable on mobile phones, thus reducing printing and paper consumption.

More than half a million people have watched European matches in Celje. And we just hosted our half-millionth visitor in front of a packed house at the Champions League match against Paris. The lucky visitor won a trip to the F4 event in Cologne, and especially enjoyed the performances of **Tone Kregar, Boštjan Dermol** and **Teodor Amanović – Toš**. The games in Celje have become a family event that different generations cheer along to and enjoy.





Faster rehabilitation through technology

Our athletes are the main asset of the club and the sponsors who invest in them. It is only natural that technological advances in the management of solutions for data acquisition, analysis and management have been introduced in order to manage the club more effectively and efficiently, above all with the aim of achieving victories on the court. Digital innovation solutions have also been introduced in the field of sports performance, which has always had a strong link with technology.

The desire to measure athletes' abilities, understand their limitations and optimise their rehabilitation after injury has been realised through the use of dedicated apps and databases that facilitate the work of the coaching teams.

The use of analytical data and opponent analysis software enables the teams to strategize faster how to face opposing teams, making it easier for coaches and players, as well as detecting and correcting mistakes in real time – even during matches.



We are looking out for the best interests of our players

The professional staff is always trying to improve the fitness of the players and works on injury prevention and sports rehabilitation after injuries. This also means implementing and adopting useful management and monitoring tools that are in line with the latest technological innovations in the industry, such as medical records, exercise checks and schedules, control indicators and others, all with the aim improving the quality of the monitoring system, which includes medical and sports diagnoses.

There is also a strong focus on strengthening the psychological aspects that are key to success on the court and in life.

The psychological aspect consists of a number of important and interrelated areas, such as nutrition, environment (e.g. the facilities in which athletes train or young athletes attend school), personality, socialisation and relationships with significant adults. This approach enables the club to raise athletes with the necessary soft skills, both personal and competitive, that will help them to become fully adjusted human beings, able to integrate into their social environment positively.

Cooperation with handball clubs

The Celje club has also been distinguished by its excellent cooperation with many domestic and foreign European handball clubs for many years. Europe also recognises Celje as a club with an outstanding talent pool and has great confidence in our handball players and the work we do with them. This is, of course, most evident from transfers to their teams. In the past, our players have been transferred to teams in Veszprem, Kielce, Kiel, Montpellier, Nantes, and the latest high-profile transfer to one of the giants was also the first Slovene transfer to a famous Spanish club: Domen Makuc, one of the most talented Slovene players, who convinced Barcelona with his performances in the RK CPL and signed a contract with them.

“Thank you to the Celje club, who offered me the opportunity and showed great confidence in me all these years, so that I could progress and reach the next step in my career. All my coaches so far have made this possible for me, so many thanks to them – they have helped me to progress and they have given me a great deal. I have progressed in my game and I will always love coming back to my city and the Zlatorog Arena.

“Thank you, Celje,” said Domen Makuc as he bid farewell to Zlatorog Arena.

These transfers are probably the biggest confirmation of the excellent work done by RK CPL and its coaches, and the only question is who will be the next player from the Celje Handball Academy to shine on the biggest handball stage.





Outstanding attendance of RK CPL matches in the Champions League

The European Handball Federation has provided its clubs with very interesting data on the viewership of the competition or of each individual club. The outstanding viewing figures are an added motivation for the players and the club to always perform at our best.

In the 2020-2021 EHF Champions League:

— Celje matches were watched by 26,385,615 viewers worldwide

— There was live coverage of 566 Celje Pivovarna Laško matches

— The total TV presence was 575 hours

— The most-watched game was the first leg against Paris, which was watched by 4.3 million viewers

— On average, each Celje match was broadcast in 17 different markets

— The content provided to us by the EHF alone had a reach of 1,423,598 people on our social networks

— 74,142 viewers watched the matches on EHF.TV

Progress during the pandemic

Sport and digitalisation have always been linked, both in terms of monitoring athletes' abilities and creating a good experience for spectators. The importance of innovation and digitalisation has become even greater during the pandemic, as smart use of technology has also enabled us to stay connected to our fans and sponsors.

Digital innovations keep track of athletes' abilities, improve the spectator experience and keep people connected, even during the pandemic.

The support of the fans and other supporters of the club means a lot to us, even at a time when meeting in person has been difficult. **That is why we have started a special project called "Become a Legendary Name of Zlatorog", where fans can inscribe their name on a chair of their choice in our arena for one year.** In this way they support the club, its various adult sections and its youth sections. This will help us to continue to grow and provide professional and technical support for the implementation of our programmes. As some matches were played in front of empty stands, we provided live coverage of the matches on social media. **The first season was commentated on by the legendary Ivo Milovanovič.**



IME IN PRIIMEK

LAŠKO PIVOVARNA

25

POSTANITE
LEGENDARNO IME
ZLATOROGA

ZAKUPI SEDEŽ

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We have also revamped our online store, where fans can choose from t-shirts, gifts, souvenirs and many other products seamlessly and easily. This allows them to buy various accessories remotely and be informed about the delivery of their products. Due to the peculiarities of the year of COVID-19, we have had to adapt to the new conditions and take care to protect our players. 12 freestanding disinfectors, electronic thermometers and hygiene stations have been installed in the Zlatorog Arena. This has improved the safety of visitors in the arena and club facilities. To help achieve success in the fight against the virus, we have entered into a cooperation with the Celje Health Centre and given them space in Zlatorog Arena for a vaccination centre and testing.

The infections have mostly happened in national teams or in leisure time. The virus has never once spread among players. During this time, we have performed more than 2,000 HAT tests and more than 350 PCR tests. Bosch Slovenia donated €15,000 to the club for a new Vivalytic machine for player testing.





SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CLUB

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Pursuing the right values for the long-term success of the club

We demonstrate our social responsibility by behaving ethically towards the environment, our sponsors, our fans and wider society. We attend to the welfare of our members and we look after their health, whilst also involving their families in the club's activities.

We are involved in many charity events and projects, we ensure access for people with disabilities and we respect all members of society. During the initial wave of the COVID-19 epidemic, we also helped children who could not successfully study from home due to a lack of computer equipment.

Only by pursuing the right values can we achieve long-term results for the club and for individuals.

We were the first sports club to join the international Diversity Charter project.

The Diversity Charter is a European project that Slovenia was the 20th country to join, and 59 organisations signed the Charter when it arrived in Slovenia in 2017. The Honorary Patron of the Diversity Charter Slovenia project is the President of the Republic, Borut Pahor. The aim of the charter is to promote the values of diversity, inclusion and equality.



The world of sport committed to embracing diversity

Diversity, inclusion and equality are the sources of progress and essential to the development of a fairer society. **We pay special attention to the different needs, views and opinions of our members and are aware of the interdependence and complementarity of different ways of working.** By taking responsibility for our impact, we contribute to a thriving and sustainable community. That's why we were delighted to sign the Diversity Charter, which has so far been signed by more than 160 different organisations in Slovenia, and our club is the first of them from the world of sport.

We firmly reject discrimination of any kind and clearly advocate the importance of including players regardless of their ethnicity. **After the incident in Barcelona, both the club and the Florijani fan club have publicly apologised to Barça and Dika Mem for the inappropriate behaviour of individuals in the fan group.** We are committed to respecting a culture of acceptance, equality, fair play and appropriate cheering.

The RK CPL denounces any kind of violence, racism or incitement to inequality that might occur between different fan groups and works to raise awareness of the importance of ethical behaviour both on and off the court.



ENOUGH.
SAY NO TO RACISM



Players as role models for young people and society as a whole

Being a role model also confers a high level of responsibility. Not only do our players have to meet the high expectations of the fans, they also have to represent their club at all times. **Since players are celebrities, they can promote sustainability issues such as responsible behaviour and a healthy lifestyle.** If they behave inappropriately, they damage not only their own reputation, but also that of the team and the club. At the club, we teach and protect our players when necessary. To this end, the club has been **implementing social network behaviour workshops for the past few years, involving both the players and staff of the first team.** This helps them to understand how to use social networks and how to communicate with the fan community.

Social networks are just one way of interacting, and team spirit develops through actual communication and socialising without the help of the web.

The club therefore supports healthy lifestyles through campaigns and messages on social networks and promotes campaigns that raise awareness and advocate for the positive effects of connecting in person.



Support for Europa Donna

We support the organisation in a variety of ways, whether by wearing pink kits, by raising funds through the sale of selected products or simply by spreading the word about their work through our recognisability.

Early detection and awareness-raising helps to improve disease survival and empower victims of diseases.

For several years we have been supporting Europa Donna Slovenia, the Slovenian association for the fight against breast cancer.

We make mature decisions

We also support the right values on our roads. Together with the Celje Police Directorate, we have encouraged safe driving by setting an example and reminding everyone involved in traffic of the importance of responsible behaviour and following traffic rules.

Drivers who got a result of 0.0 during the increased checks with the breathalyser test received a voucher for free entry to the club's matches.

Helping Santa Claus

The Association Enostavno pomagam runs Santa's Gift Factory, where gifts are made for children who might not otherwise receive them due to lack of funds. Every year, we help collect gifts for more than 1,000 children at risk.



Computer equipment for children by selling face masks

In difficult times, we as a society need to come to the aid of each other and look after our most vulnerable members. Unfortunately, some schoolchildren from socially disadvantaged families do not have access to the internet or computer equipment, which is and will continue to be a problem if they are infected with COVID-19 and are being schooled at home. **That's why we were happy to donate the earnings from the sale of our protective masks, which you can still find on our website.** Families can now borrow computer equipment from their school while they are studying from home, so that they can follow their lessons without interruption.

Collaborating with the local surroundings

RK CPL has long hand links to the city in which it operates. The people of Celje are mostly fans of ours, they take our successes as their own and are proud of them. We have become part of the identity of the city, and we treat it with care.

The youngest inhabitants of Celje “grow up” with sport, which fosters a spirit of community and unity. Volunteers, coaches and other club staff also develop alongside the children. Being a role model and teacher for young players is a responsible role that empowers and provides great satisfaction.

The Board of Directors, which oversees the club's stable operation, is also made up of successful entrepreneurs and local representatives. The importance of the Mayor's presence when he was admitted to the Board of Directors was also highlighted by former Club President Jernej Smisl: “Our club is one of the biggest ambassadors of Celje, which was confirmed by the title of the Best Sports Brand in Slovenia, which we received in January 2021. The support of the city is of the utmost importance for sport, so I welcome the Mayor to our Board, where I am sure he will make an extremely important contribution to our work.” Community involvement has been important to our development since the club's inception, so we are happy to help when problems arise.

For example, together with Pivovarna Laško Union and many other athletes and volunteers, we helped the hop growers in the Savinja Valley to prepare their fields of hops, as they were hit hard when they were unable to get seasonal workers due to the pandemic.

More than 1,250 hours of volunteer work have also been put in by 9 members of our team, including the Club President, the Club Director, and all the coaches and players of the first team.

All the athletes and staff came together in solidarity and showed that even on days when we had to keep our distance, we can still be very much together.

The future is sustainable

Over the last decades, there has been an increase in the number of projects and programmes that include sport as a tool for achieving non-sport related development results. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this trend has intensified, focusing on the promotion of healthy lifestyles with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

The potential of sport to contribute to sustainable development is also enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sport can promote tolerance, respect, empower young people and influence them on the importance of health, education and social inclusion. These values are also key to the development of RK CPL and we firmly believe in them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected our daily lives; things we took for granted have become difficult to access, work processes have changed, social gatherings have been curtailed, along with other impacts. Throughout the pandemic, RK CPL has proven its resilience by pursuing its core values and strengthening its relationship with the local community, sponsors and all relevant stakeholders.

We intend to continue pursuing our sustainability goals and expanding and building a resilient local environment that provides space for all interested individuals and communities to work and thrive.

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Ljubljana, 11.03.2022

Spoštovani!

Revizorji društva smo že peto leto in lahko trdimo, da dobro poznamo njegovo poslovanje, cilje in vrednote. Pri izvajanju naših revizijskih postopkov spoznavamo tako delovanje društva kot tudi širše okolje v katerem društvo deluje.

Zavedamo se velikega pomena, ki ga ima društvo za razvoj rokometu v okolju kjer deluje.

Naše sodelovanje z vodstvom društva in strokovnimi sodelavci v finančnih in računovodstvu temelji na visoki strokovnosti in odkritosti. Cenimo zavezanost vodstva društva k transparentnosti poslovanja le-tega in k izpolnjevanju visokih standardov, ki jih mora društvo izpolnjevati zaradi svojega delovanja.

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“Hero”

Official song of RK Celje Pivovarna Laško

Music by: Teodor Amanovič – Toš

Lyrics: Boštjan Čukur, Boštjan Dermol,
Tone Kregar



I laugh with you, I cry with you,
with you I know what I want.
I stand by you in difficult moments,
I love to sing with the Florijans.

Celje my hero, I raise my hands in the air for you.
You are my heart, I breathe only for you.

Flags are flying for your victories,
Your badge on your chest, heads held high.
The song echoes with the rhythm of joy,
I'll love you for the rest of my life.

Celje my hero, I raise my hands in the air for you.
You are my heart, I breathe only for you.
Celje my hero, you are always a champion for me.
You are my heart, I live only for you.

The song echoes with the rhythm of joy,
I'll love you for the rest of my life.

Celje my hero, I raise my hands in the air for you.
You are my heart, I breathe only for you.
Celje my hero, you are always a champion for me.
You are my heart, I live only for you.



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PIVOVARNA LAŠKO



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