



S I L A I W C L



Interview with H.E. Ms Zorana Vlatković

Ambassador of Serbia to Slovenia

Have you always wanted to be an ambassador? What drew you into a career in diplomacy?

Since I had considered becoming a lawyer from an early age, I actually enrolled and graduated from the Faculty of Law. Seeing the broader picture now, diplomacy does not really differ from practicing the law that much, as I often need to convince the other side that the position of my country is the right one.

After graduation, one thing led to another and I got a job in the Ministry of the Interior, where I had been working in the field of international cooperation for many years. I realised at that time that what I am most interested in and where I see myself being active at, is in fact diplomacy.

Tell us about a time when your professional and family responsibilities came into conflict.

In diplomacy, as in everything else in life, creating a balance between family and business life is crucial, but often difficult and

sometimes we are not really satisfied with the result... For me, the biggest challenge was being appointed as Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia here in Slovenia, given that cooperation between the two countries in the same region is very dynamic. As a new ambassador, I wanted to meet people and learn about Slovenia as soon as possible - so I moved to Ljubljana when my daughter was only 3 months old. I remember that period as extremely challenging, with many high-level meetings, and very little sleep.

Women are statistically underrepresented politically both domestically and on the world stage. What advice would you give to women seeking to pursue careers in diplomacy? What should they be prepared for?

Indeed, women are not sufficiently represented in decision-making positions, very few of them are being ambassadors, and that needs to change. My "advice" would go as

follows: never give up, be ready and prepared to prove yourself at work at all times, embrace compromise in private and business life, and be aware that everything is possible.

What about Serbian embassy in Slovenia, are there more men or women on your team?

Up until last year, the Embassy of Serbia was an "all-female" embassy, and we were very proud of that fact. A male colleague only joined us last summer. I think that balance is important in this professional segment as well, as working in a women's collective often brings additional challenges.

What has been the biggest challenge for you caused by the lockdown or restrictions, professionally and personally?

During the lockdown, personal and professional challenges have somehow mixed. Personally, the biggest challenge is the fact that kindergartens are closed, and there is a whole new dimension in keeping the balance between work and family life.

A really large number of Serbian citizens live in Slovenia and current travel bans and restrictive border regimes have made their lives extremely complicated. They turn to the Embassy for help and that definitely places an additional burden on the Embassy.

Is there much difference between Slovenia and Serbia? What was your favorite thing about living and working in Slovenia?

Slovenia and Serbia, being countries in the same region as well as countries that briefly shared their history, have many similarities but also differ one from another significantly. There is a big difference in mentality and in the lifestyle. Slovenia is a beautiful and orderly country, with divine nature and people who know how to appreciate and enjoy it.

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