



POD  
ČRTO

# Journalism with impact: The case of POD ČRTO, a non-profit media for investigative journalism

May 2023



## What is POD ČRTO?

POD ČRTO (Eng.: *'The Bottom Line'*) is a Slovenian independent and non-profit media outlet focusing on investigative reporting, data journalism and in-depth stories. Founded in 2014, POD ČRTO creates impact through in-depth watchdog journalism, highlighting systemic irregularities and calling upon those responsible to present solutions.

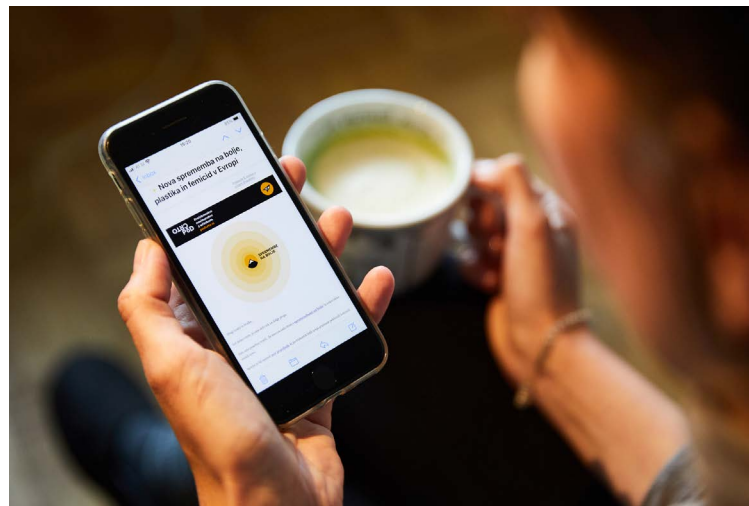
With a thorough follow-up, we track new developments and ensure our stories do not simply dissipate once published. It is our belief that investigative journalism can make significant contributions to changes for the better in society. Our investigative findings are regularly quoted in reports by the European Commission, Council of Europe, U.S. Department of State and others.

All POD ČRTO content is available on the [podcrto.si](https://podcrto.si) website free of charge.

Our work is supported by contributions from individuals, private sector donors, international foundations and other organisations supporting investigative journalism.

## How do we track impact?

POD ČRTO tracks impact by systematically following the development of our stories. We track new developments confirming our findings (court rulings, supervisory findings and reviews), responses from decision-makers, direct actions addressing the irregularities, legislation changes and the use of POD ČRTO investigative findings as resources by decision-makers in Slovenia and internationally.



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## How do we communicate impact with our readers and donors?

As a watchdog media organisation, we follow all our investigations from publication until solution. We publish follow up stories with new developments, produce podcasts, conduct interviews with relevant authorities and share regular updates with our audiences through designated communication channels.

Main channels for communicating impact:

- **Weekly POD ČRTO newsletter 'Weekend Reading from POD ČRTO',**
- **Monthly and annual donor reports,**
- **Social media channels,**
- **Designated website: <https://podcrto.si/changes-for-the-better/>**



796

TOTAL NUMBER  
OF PUBLICATIONS  
(2014-2023)



10

NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL  
INVESTIGATIONS WE HAVE  
CONTRIBUTED TO



Global Investigative  
Journalism Network

EUROPEAN  
DATA JOURNALISM  
NETWORK

MEMBERSHIPS IN  
INTERNATIONAL  
NETWORKS



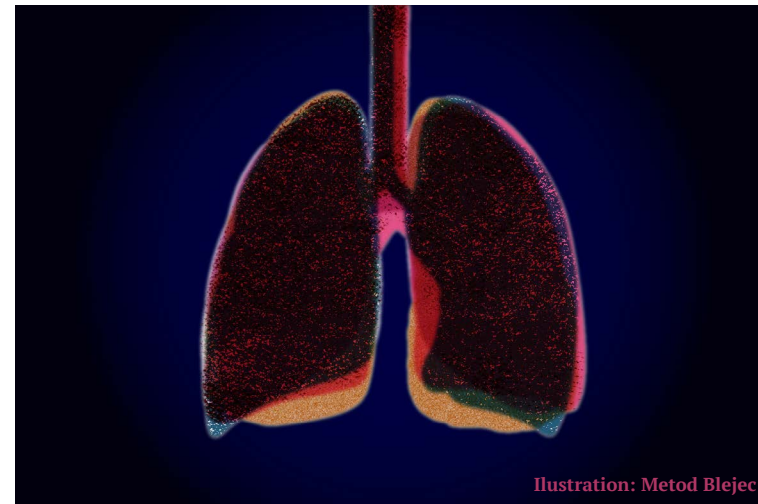
61

NUMBER OF  
TRACKED IMPACT  
(2014-2023)




# Highlighted impact in the Civitates grant period from 2021-2023

A full list of POD ČRTO investigative topics:



## Occupational diseases

**Investigation:** POD ČRTO began working on the issue of occupational diseases in Slovenia in 2015. For decades, an unregulated system has prevented people with occupational diseases from having an occupational disease officially recognized/verified, which prevented them from accessing the entitlements that result from its official recognition: disability insurance reimbursements and the possibility of compensation. Experts estimate that around 1,000 workers in Slovenia fall ill with an occupational disease each year. We have been following the issue for 8 years, and in this period, several ministries have promised to improve the regulations. However, each time the promise has been broken.

 **Impact:** Following a complaint from the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2021, the Ministry of Health has adopted a new Rule on the Recognition of Occupational Diseases. The new rule came into force in May 2023. More on this in the article: [New Rule on Occupational Illnesses adopted](#) (February 2023)

All publications on the topic are available here:  
[podcrto.si/oznaka/poklicne-bolezni/](https://podcrto.si/oznaka/poklicne-bolezni/)

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## Media ownership

**Investigation:** Since 2019, POD ČRTO has been investigating abuses of media ownership in Slovenia. We have looked into the misuse of media for political purposes and propaganda, the non-transparency of media ownership as well as the deliberate dissemination of disinformation and self-promotion. The investigation into media ownership is the most internationally resonant, high-profile POD ČRTO investigation to date.



**Impact 1:** POD ČRTO's investigation findings on media ownership in Slovenia were quoted multiple times in the 2021 European commission Rule of Law report. The report also highlighted inefficient prosecution of corruption in the country – another theme that features prominently in many of POD ČRTO's investigations in the past years. More on this in the article: [Rule of Law: European commission report quotes our findings on media ownership](#) (July 2021)



**Impact 2:** POD ČRTO's investigations on media ownership and astroturfing were also an important source for a report on the state of media in Slovenia and attacks of the (then) ruling party SDS on media independence. The report was published by Media Freedom Rapid Response Mechanism, which brings together international journalist organizations. More on the report in the article: [Pod črto's investigations an important source for European report on media in Slovenia](#) (June 2021)

All publications on the topic are available here:  
[podcrto.si/dosje/mediji/](https://podcrto.si/dosje/mediji/)



Illustration: Matija Medved



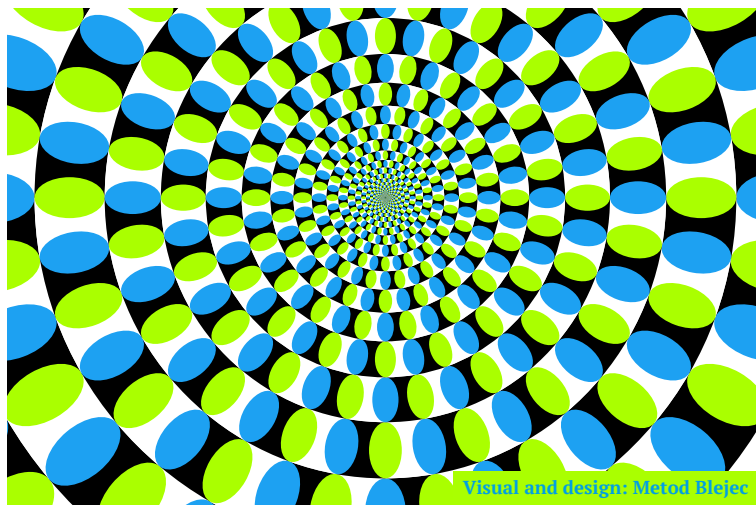
## Media / Misuse of public funds

**Investigation:** In 2019, POD ČRTO investigated the use of municipal newsletters across Slovenia. Such newsletters are issued and financed by municipalities, with millions of euros of taxpayer funds spent every year. We reported on abuse of municipally owned media and taxpayer money for political promotion of former mayor of Koper, Boris Popovič.



**Impact:** In 2021, Koper municipality's supervisory board confirmed our findings. More on the story in the article: [Supervisors: Popovič abused municipal paper for election campaign](#) (July 2021)

All publications on the topic are available here:  
[podcrto.si/dosje/mediji/](https://podcrto.si/dosje/mediji/)



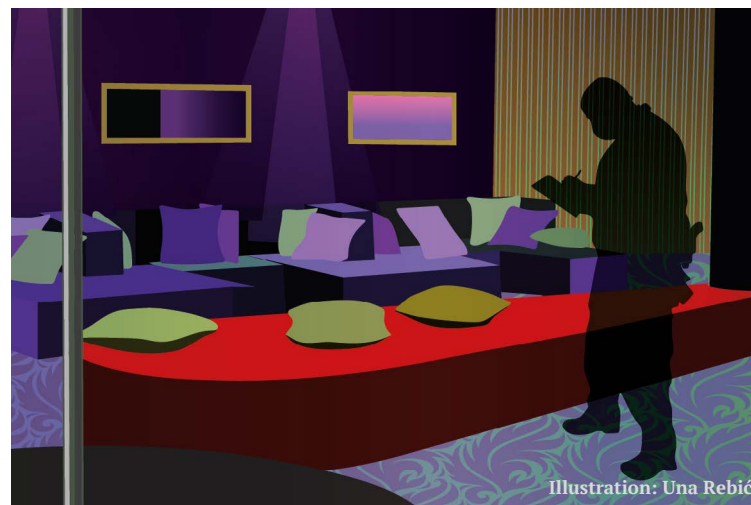
## Astroturfing

**Investigation:** At the beginning of 2021, we uncovered how the propaganda machine of the now former ruling party SDS functions on Twitter. POD ČRTO analysed the network of a few hundred Twitter profiles attacking critics of the SDS political party (SDS is the largest right-wing political party in Slovenia and former ruling party in the period from 2020–2022). We identified 27 profiles with stolen or machine-generated photos that had a high probability of being fake. Almost at the same time as our disclosure, SDS MP, Alenka Jeraj, accidentally revealed she is running a fake Twitter profile under the handle *Kopriva*.



**Impact:** Twitter has suspended 12 profiles on its social network that were identified by POD ČRTO's investigation to be spreading propaganda and attacking critics of the SDS party, while using fake profile photos.

All publications on the topic are available here:  
[podcrto.si/oznaka/astroturfing/](https://podcrto.si/oznaka/astroturfing/)



## Crime

**Investigation:** In the autumn of 2020, POD ČRTO published an investigative series on Marina brothel. We uncovered sloppy police investigation into the matter, which resulted in inadmissible evidence against pimps, accused of human trafficking while procuring prostitutes for Marina. As a result, the pimps were released without charges.



**Impact:** In January 2021, Slovenian police and Ministry of the Interior started an internal investigation into police conduct in the case of Marina. More on this in the article: [The case of Marina: evidence ruled inadmissible, ministry starts an investigation into police conduct](#) (January 2021)

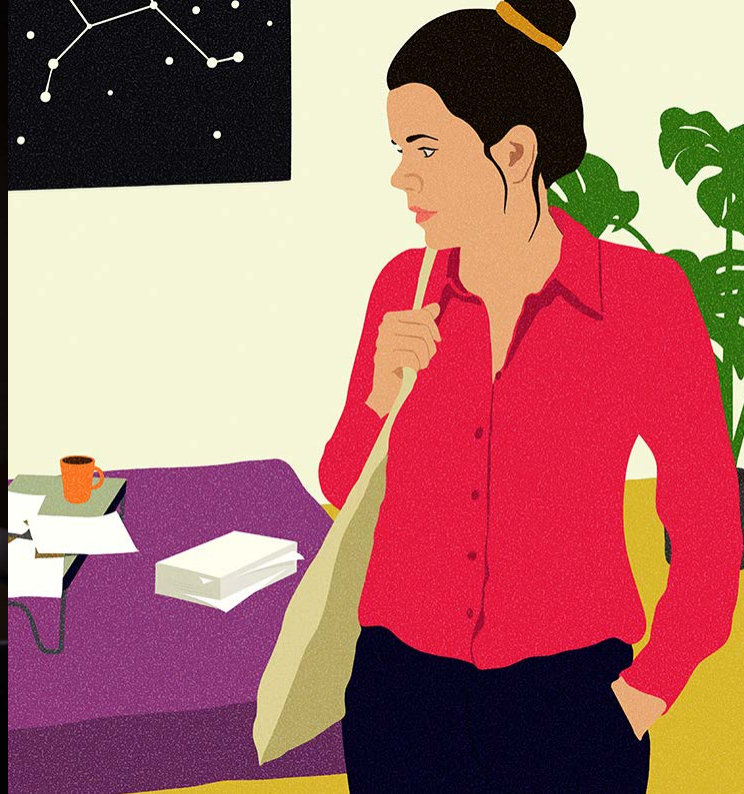
All publications on the topic are available here:  
[podcrto.si/oznaka/klub-marina/](https://podcrto.si/oznaka/klub-marina/)

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Want to learn more about the impact of our investigations?  
The complete list is available here:  
[podcrto.si/changes-for-the-better/](https://podcrto.si/changes-for-the-better/)





**POD ČRTO**  
a non-profit media for  
investigative journalism

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