

## RESTORING COMMON GROUND

For a long time, a shared perception of reality has been taken for granted. While opinions on how best to solve social challenges have diverged, a rough consensus existed on what is materially real and what is politically acceptable. This consensus served as the minimally required common ground from which meaningful social action could emerge. Today, our realities seem to intersect less and less. As a consequence, the aforementioned common ground is shrinking. To make matters worse, this comes at a time when the most pressing challenges can only be solved through concerted collective action.

The erosion of this common ground has taken many forms – some complementary, others seemingly contradictory. Mainstream media narratives are losing ground to fragmented discourses that are equally informed by educated scepticism and conspiracy theories; insistence on strict political correctness is mirrored in severe degradation of public discourse; attempts at systemic progressive change are being met with hardline reactionary blowback; retreat into political passivity is paralleled by ever more radical political action; the widespread rejection of institutions that have traditionally been perceived as trustworthy coincides with the rise of popularly supported authoritarianism. And the list goes on. All these are symptoms of a fragmented reality, which are exacerbated by underlying macro-social dynamics including rising economic inequality, opportunistic political populism, renewed great power rivalries, and meteoric technological advancement.

Yet what is causing these symptoms — what is causing our realities to drift apart? This question will serve as the point of departure for Young Bled Strategic Forum 2024. By bringing together young leaders from across the globe, we hope to deconstruct the macro and micro forces fuelling the trend and then build on the insights to crowdsource ground-up solutions that could help our realities, currently siloed off and running in parallel, to re-converge and intersect once again.

To make our exploration as purposeful as possible, the three-day event will be hosted in Pokljuka, which is located in the mountainous heart of the Triglav National Park, away from the bustle of the capital. The programme will focus on participant-driven activities, ranging from workshops and brainstorming sessions to one-on-one Q&A conversations with experts, all neatly strung together with lively informal social events. Following the conclusion of Young Bled Strategic Forum, the participants will also get to attend Bled Strategic Forum, i.e. the main event in Bled, which in recent years has become the leading high-level conference in Central and South-Eastern Europe.