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We reveal

Szas Octopus: Who are the musicians-lobbyists rescuing the Szas association from the new law and the disclosure of secret transactions?

The same faces at the Szas assemblies and in the National Assembly, where they attend the deputies. They are representatives of many seemingly independent but connected associations of music creators. However, the goal is one: to defend and maintain Szas' non-transparent business.

zdravstvo.si

07.07.2016 22:37
Writes: Editorial

Keywords: [+szas](#) [+lobbying](#) [+national assembly](#) [+law](#) [+tikara blacksmith](#) [+feather lovšin](#) [+jan plestenjak](#) [+omar naber](#) [+gal gjurin](#)



Photomontage: Portal PLUS

What do Matjaž Zupan, Pero Lovšin, Gal Gjurin, Tinkara Kovač, Domen Gracej have in common? Not only that they are or have been involved in music, but also that they are considered to be a very well coordinated lobbying team for Szas, or a powerful music lobby. While Tinkara Kovač was the last to join the team, the remaining members of the lobby are mostly responsible for the early departure of Dr Jurij Žurej, Luka Novak and Vesna Stanković Juričić from the position of Director of the Intellectual Property Office (UIL) in recent years, and for the fact that, despite numerous attempts, no changes have yet been made to the Copyright and Related Rights Act (CRAA).

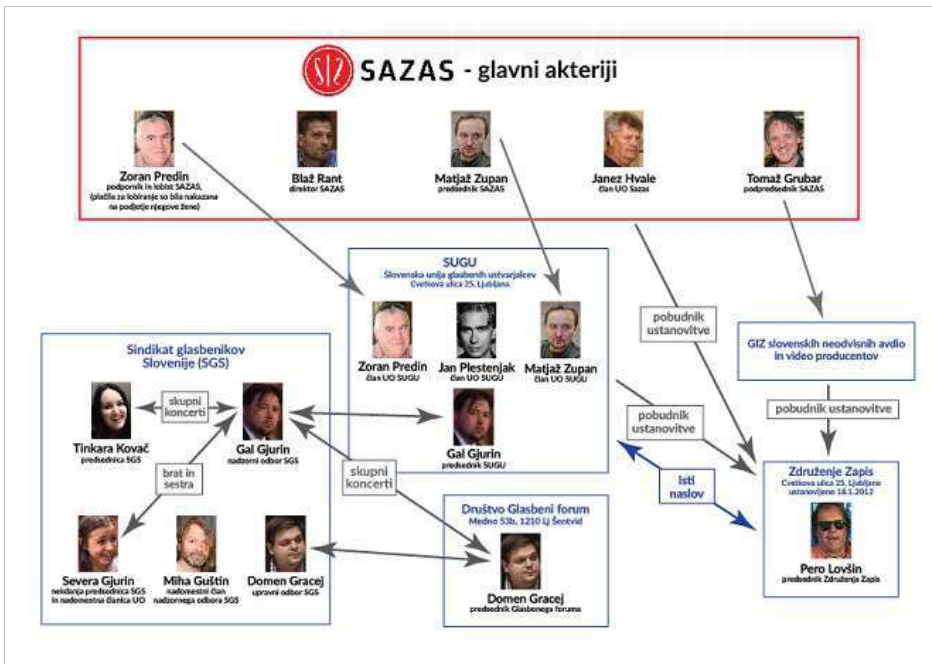
But to get the full picture of the Szas lobby, we first need to go back to the beginning of last year. At that time, the Ministry of Economy, in cooperation with the Intellectual Property Office, had drafted amendments to the ZASP, and according to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Szas had 41 lobby contacts in the National Assembly in just one month, which ranked it as the number one lobbyist in terms of activity (source).

Only a handful of people and a few organizations hold Szas in check and declare themselves representatives of all authors. Among them are Matjaž Zupan, Pero Lovšin, Gal Gjurin, Tinkara Kovač, Domen Gracej, Tomaž Grubar, Blaž Rant, Zoran Predin ...

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So far extremely successful lobbyists

The SD parliamentary group then announced that **Tomaž Grubar** (Sazas vice-president), **Primož Grašič**, **Andrej Kregar**, **Blaž Rant** (then legal department, now Sazas director), **Peter Lovšin** and **Matjaž Zupan** (Sazas president) had come to them on Sazas' initiative. The legendary **Mojmir Sepe** and **Jure Robežnik** probably joined them for a stronger psychological effect. In the SMC parliamentary group, the associations they represented were added to the names of the musicians they visited, thus clearly showing how the Sazas network works: Matjaž Zupan (Sazas), **Jože Skubic** (Sazas), Blaž Rant (Sazas), Tomaž Grubar (Economic Interest Association of Slovenian Independent Audio and Video Producers), Primož Grašič (Sazas), Peter Lovšin (Association of Authors, Producers and Performers of Slovenia - ZAPIS) and **Lado Leskovar** (Sazas).



Blaž Rant, director of the Sazas association, although this association has no employees. Source: RTV Slo

Pressure on political decision-makers due to the announced changes to the Copyright and Related Rights Act then continued. The so-called Coordination of Music, Audiovisual and Literary Creators **Galus** ([source](#)), led by **Peter Lovšin**, came forward and demanded the withdrawal of the ZASP and the dismissal of some employees of the Intellectual Property Office. In addition to Lovšin, **Domen Gracej** (Music Forum), **Gal Gjurin** (Slovenian Union of Music Creators SUGU) and **Andrej Štritof** also signed the letter, from the Association of Slovenian Independent Audio and Video Producers. And what was the outcome of the pressures exerted by Sazas' lobby or musicians who have not been active on the scene for many years? The amendment to the Copyright and Related Rights Act ended up in the dustbin of history ...

As soon as a "dangerous" law appears, a well-coordinated team of Sazas lobbyists is activated

Now that the **Collective Management of Copyright and Related Rights Act (ZKUASP)** is in the parliamentary procedure, the story repeats itself, and the same persons and associations are in the forefront again. This time they even **wear NE ZKUASP** badges. According to our information obtained unofficially in the National Assembly, a "real drama" was taking place in the premises of the parliamentary groups again (remember how **Luka Novak** had to interrupt a meeting with collective organizations at the UIL years ago because some of their representatives became too violent?). And this is only so that a law that would increase control over collecting societies and give authors more rights would (again) fall. In the **SMC** parliamentary group for example, some members of the "ad hoc" coalition **Avneko**, led by **Gal Gjurin**, and consisting of the Union of Musicians of Slovenia (president **Tinkara Kovač**), the association SUGU (president **Gjurin**), Sazas, the Music Forum (**Domen Gracej**), the association **ZAPIS** (**Peter Lovšin**) ...



President of the Music Forum **Domen Gracej** Source: RTV Slo

But let's move on: the Social Democrats' parliamentary group was visited by **Domen Gracej**, **Gal Gjurin**, **Tinkara Kovač**, **Blaž Rant** (director of Sazas) and **Tone Frelj** (Zamp). "At their request, the MP **Mirjam Bon Klanjšček** met with representatives of the following organizations: the Trade Union of Slovenian musicians, Sugu, SAZAS, AMP and Music Forum", they say in the parliamentary group of **unaffiliated MPs**.

Omar reads what was written, Jan forgot to read the law



However, Sazas's lobby once again took care of the psychological effect on the deputies, as he sent **Jan Plestenjak** and **Omar Naber** to the meeting of the Committee on Economy to oppose the **ZKUASP**. But as it turned out in the end (as we prove in the published videos), Sazas' structures misinformed the unfortunate Plestenjak, so SMC MP **Anita Koleša** had to teach him about the content of the law, while Mr. Naber apparently read on behalf of Sazas leaders. something he didn't even understand.



Do the secret donations to Gjurin's SUGU come from Sazas?

Although at first glance it seems as if many organizations uniting all Slovenian artists have opposed the adoption of the law, a detailed analysis shows a different picture. For example, the organizations ZAPIS and SUGU have their headquarters at the same address, namely at **Cvetkova ulica 25** . Coincidence?

It should be emphasized that Sazas and SUGU are also very closely linked. Among other things, SUGU wants to *"improve the public image of Slovenian musical creativity and creators and put an end to the long-standing media attacks of music users on key institutions that support domestic musical creativity"* . In addition to Gjurin, **Matjaž Zupan** (president of Sazasa) and **Zoran Predin** also sit on the SUGU board . Among other things, it is known that Predin's wife received remittances for lobbying from an external contractor SAZAS. The SUGU website is also managed by an external contractor, Sazas' company **Stroka, doo Ajpes** reveals that SUGU received grants twice, in 2012 and 2014. In 2012, donations to SUGU amounted to **EUR 16,476** (total revenues), and in 2014 to **EUR 17,000** (also total revenues). We were unable to find out whether Sazas took care of these donations with the authors' money, as SUGU did not answer our journalistic questions. Who is this mysterious "benefactor from the background" who thus donates 17,000 euros to Gjurin's organization? If everything is legal, why is Gjurin hiding it so much?



Tinkara Kovač, President of the Trade Union of Slovenian Musicians Source: RTV Slo

The Slovenian Musicians' Union (SSG) was initially run by **Gjurin's** sister **Severa Gjurin** , but now by Tinkara Kovač, with whom Gjurin organizes concerts together, and Severa Gjurin remains in the union as a member of the (alternate) board. The other, who performs at concerts together with Gjurin, is Domen Gracej, who leads the Music Forum organization. Of course, Domen Gracej is also on the SSG board of directors. SAZAS and SUGU are together the initiators of the establishment of the organization ZAPIS, led by Pero Lovšin. The circle is thus closed.



Pero Lovšin, first man of the association ZAPIS Source: RTV Slo

15 people decide everything

Together with some individuals, we can therefore list 15 people who, under the leadership of Matjaž Zupan, hold Sazas in chess and declare themselves representatives of all authors. These one and the same people lead or help to establish various "independent" organizations, the sole purpose of which, according to our findings, is to "cover the back" of the leadership of this association. It was estimated that no more than 15 people were present at the last assembly. And it was mostly about the names we're writing about in this article.

The new ZKUASP law is a big threat to the current abundance in which a handful of people who control Sazas live, so according to our information, the officials of this association are already putting pressure on the **National Council** to veto the law if the National Assembly adopts it. That is why we at **Portal PLUS** have decided to present to you individuals and organizations that have been pressuring politicians for many years in order not to introduce control over Sazas' operations and not to give authors too many rights to co-manage collective organizations.

Most Slovenian authors, out of fear and apprehension, prefer to keep quiet so that they do not lose the few euros that Sazas transfers to them. If they raise their voice, they will face the abolition of miserable pay and lawsuits that they cannot afford financially. And so Sazas in a very simple way created an army of silent authors who have no voting rights. According to the statute, those who have a lot of money have these. However, whoever has money in the association also decides how the money will be divided. And if he gives himself more, he will have even more voting rights ...

Will politics kneel before Sazas's lobby this time too ?!

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