

Beyond Business:

What Else We Did In 2016

With the time and energy we all invested, we made 2016 unforgettable together.
This is an overview of our best activities and accomplishments.



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Fun

We are widely recognized for our donations to educational and environmental causes and for the expert knowledge our people readily share at conferences and other events. But we are not always aware ourselves of the contribution we are making to our communities and our environment, both ecological and social.

When all of our many offices are taken into account, our log of meetups, celebrations, get-togethers, events, exchanges, excursions, charitable acts and other “extracurricular” activities runs into hundreds.

Here we compiled the very best of those actions.

Learning



Trainings

Learning Days

Trainings

We organized a slew of trainings during 2016. There were some hundred licensing trainings held, with many of our colleagues earning certificates for mastering different technologies.

There were well over twenty training themes under business topics and soft skills, delivered through more than 1500 learning sessions, including trainings and lectures. This accounting does not even tally various e-learning and self-learning sessions.

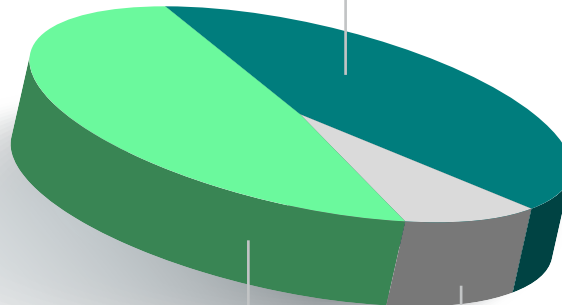
Two thirds of all our employees attended at least one training event in 2016. Many among them invested much more time in learning, raising our annual training total to two sessions per person on average.



42%

External trainings, external certifications

TRAININGS BY TYPE



48%

Internal trainings, knowledge sharing, self-learning trainings

10%

Conferences

Smart people in large rooms

Those among us who are the most passionate about learning attended our many internal knowledge-sharing opportunities: TM Breakfasts, Coffee Talks, PM Coffee Breaks and Smart Days. Most of these events were also available online, to everyone on all our locations.

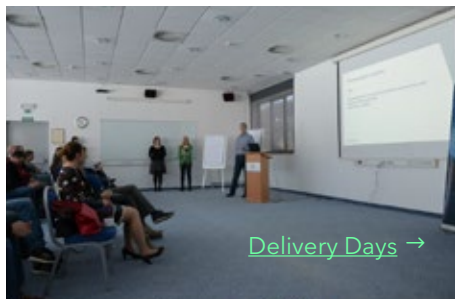
Advanced learning

To develop leadership, we train small groups of select individuals, who later cascade their knowledge to all teams. This is why we picked our Business, Leadership and Delivery Days trainers and facilitators from among the top global business trainers. We also

raised the bar in exploring strategic goals and ideas. The participants were enticed to step out of their comfort zones in various ways. Fun and relaxation, team play and bonding spiced the end of each learning day.



Leadership Days →



Delivery Days →



Hackathon →



Bussines Days →

Six four-member teams competed in our first internal Hackathon, focused on Cloud-native apps, which we hosted in our Belgrade Tech Center, with PaaS experts from HPE as educators.

Sharing

Meetups
Conferences



Meetups

Keen on sharing knowledge, especially insights about the latest technologies, we organized or took part in twenty meetups in 2016, a good third of which was dedicated to software testing.

High attendance informally voted up the most attractive topics: **Java puzzlers**; **Angular 2.0 - News & Typescript & Migration from 1.x**; **Teststorming tool**; **Front-end development from .NET programers' angle**; and the absolute winner, **Effective Communication in the Agile Team**.

Our Team ShareIT from Sarajevo, as TeamSTAR winners, received an invitation and attended the EuroSTAR Software Testing Conference in Stockholm, in early November.



[TeamSTAR winners](#) →

Conferences

Business assignments took us to many events – conferences, fairs, shows and festivals – world-wide; Comtrade also sponsored several of them. Our colleagues participated as speakers at events in different countries (Germany, Ireland, Serbia, Slovenia, BiH...)

Over thirty conferences worldwide attracted us as networking and knowledge-exchange opportunities. We traveled to places as diverse as Barcelona, Budapest, Las Vegas, Madrid, Portorož, Stuttgart, Zürich and Vienna, to discuss the latest trends with our peers.

In Ljubljana we hosted a two-day conference on DevOps and Testing, which brought together over 260 participants from across Europe. With its agile flavor, the **Quest for Quality** conference attracted attention and speakers from several renowned companies (e.g. Ryanair, IBM) and our own testing and agile experts. Organized for the first time, it was a big networking occasion for the emerging testing community.

[Quest for Quality →](#)



[Voxxed Days →](#)



[Sinergija →](#)



[Hek.si →](#)

We were also present at some notable conferences, where we acted as sponsors and delegated speakers. Among them were Sinergija and Hek.si, which we traditionally never miss, and the first Voxxed Days event hosted in Belgrade. Our experts shared knowledge with peers from a broad IT community beyond the region.

Culture & Communication

Organisational
Culture

Internal
Communication

Peer Recognition



In 2016, we continued a three-year long process of supporting our company's culture transformation, and effected a comprehensive, company-wide culture change.

We did not decree it from above, but made it home-grown as much as possible. Over time, more than 200 colleagues from all locations had taken part in 15 workshops and drafted the behaviors that best reflect our character.

These are now our conduct goals and guidelines, which we endorse in all our interactions. We jointly defined the five values we deem essential to our identity. They now set the standard of how we should behave and do business. During 2016, we have described them in our Book of Values, owned by everyone in the company.



[Book of Values](#) →

We also defined the 24 competencies which are key to performing our jobs effectively. For each competency, we included its definition and examples of typical behaviors associated with it.

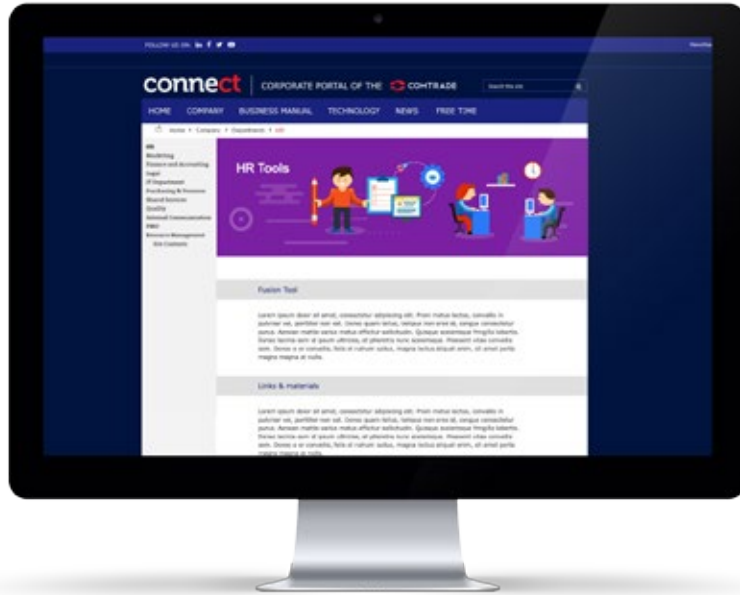
As part of that same drive, we worked hard to improve and upgrade our existing talent development processes. We introduced a simple yet holistic approach to how we develop people.

This too did not happen overnight. We now have not only an improved process, but also a new performance & development tool, Cloud-based and accessible from everywhere. Fusion will enable long-term career planning to each of us.



[The Competency Book](#) →

Internal communication



Information being such a vital part of a company culture and a successful business strategy, our team worked in parallel on the redesign of our Connect portal, to follow and capture all the changes and improvements.

QUOTE OF THE DAY ON CONNECT

"A beautiful thing is never perfect."

- Egyptian Proverb

We created close to one hundred newsletters to capture our activities and successes. We published numerous other updates on our Connect portal daily, ranging from "Quotes of the Day", to the latest trends in business and technology.



Peer recognition

We all contributed to the Company success in 2016. But by mid-December, we were ready to pick the very best among us.

Traditionally, we have always chosen from nominees in the following categories:

- Best Colleague
- Best Team Manager
- Best Team of the Year

This time, we went one better. We created a whole new category - Best Female Developer - showing our support for the global "Women in IT" initiative in yet another way.

During the second half of December, everyone had an opportunity to fill out a questionnaire about who among us deserved the titles of The Best of The Best 2016. At the end of January, final results were announced.

2016 Comtrade's Best of the Best



Some more than others, colleagues in all our offices use the Kudo Box channel to commend or thank coworkers. Our Ljubljana office alone boasts 200 cards written during 2016.

Growing



Outreach

Recruitment

Outreach

We invested a lot of time and resources in targeted outreach, mostly to technical schools of universities, promoting our student practice program and our Summer IT School, EDIT, far and wide.

Hardly a month went by without a group visit to any of our technology centers. Many high schools and universities brought their IT-oriented students to see what a renowned place of employment looks like first-hand.

In fact, we have a long history of successful collaboration with over 25 IT-focused universities in the region. We support these schools in different ways. Our experts deliver 30+ guest lectures annually, including during 2016. We often donate Tesla tablets and other equipment, and support their internal

competitions, celebrations and job fairs. We also award scholarships to outstanding students.

During the summer of 2016, we welcomed a group of international students from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and Turkey, in Belgrade and Ljubljana. Their interest shows our growing reputation as a place where education and work successfully merge.



Recruitment

We have earnestly tapped the locally relevant job fairs in 2016. We cast a wide recruiting net, looking for the best talent – our future colleagues.

In late 2016, for the first time, three of our offices joined forces and exhibited as one employer, at the IAESTE Teconomy Vienna, to reach the regional talent pool.



Give me five

Confirming the reputation Comtrade has in the regional markets, 1500 respondents in the Serbian labor market research done by the career portal Infostud placed us fourth among Serbia's top five employers. Now our Belgrade and Kragujevac offices have a clear base line to beat in the coming years.

This also explains why our recruiters were very busy during 2016. In total, group-wide, they processed 1300 job applications we received and invited close to 500 applicants for interviews, multiple times in many cases. After a rigorous selection process, 150 new colleagues joined us during the year.

March: [IT Konekt](#) | Online



April: [Practice Days](#) | Faculty of Organizational Sciences, Belgrade
[Spring Link2Job](#) | Hotel Jugoslavija, Belgrade

May: [JobFair 2016](#) | Faculty of Computing & Informatics & Faculty of Electric Engineering, Ljubljana
[IT Konekt Offline](#) | Hotel Jugoslavija, Belgrade

October: [NZS Job Fair](#) | Šumadija Fair, Kragujevac
[Fall Link2Job](#) | Hotel Jugoslavija, Belgrade
[Job Fair 16](#) | Technical Faculties of Belgrade

November: [Teconomy 2016](#) | Freihaus, Vienna
[Advanced Technologies Forum](#) | Officers' House, Niš

Wellbeing



Recreation
Environment
New Offices
Work life balance

Recreation

Whereas our one-off achievements, events and efforts draw the most attention, there are things we do on an on-going bases that also deserve to be noted.

Many among us regularly use different recreational facilities and equipment provided - from darts and foosball, through pool tables and table tennis, to entire fitness workouts and yoga classes several times each week - to combat stress and to keep fit.

We actively support the international initiative "A Bottle Cap for A Handicap" - a drive to procure electric wheelchairs for individuals with disabilities. We recycle plastic bottle caps which might otherwise end up in nature as long-term pollutants or in landfills. We also introduced bins for collecting used batteries.

Our Family Day event in Belgrade featured an open-air theatre play focused on recycling, entitled "Dirty and clean aren't equal".

Our Banja Luka office had a special commendation designed, in recognition of

keeping the air cleaner. A group of colleagues who regularly use bicycles to commute to and from the office and to get around the city received it at a specially convened office event.

Our ecologically-driven Mobility team in Slovenia competes internally in seven different categories. The criteria include not using elevators and private cars, showing preference towards public transportation, electric vehicles and/or ride-sharing and doing sports or something good for the community.

Green Comtrade

We show responsibility towards the environment in many ways and use every opportunity to promote our active ecological stance. Wherever possible, we zealously separate for recycling all materials we use at work (paper, plastic, metal & glass) into new color-coded containers, introduced at the beginning of the year, and - under stringent rules - send obsolete electronic equipment to be processed.

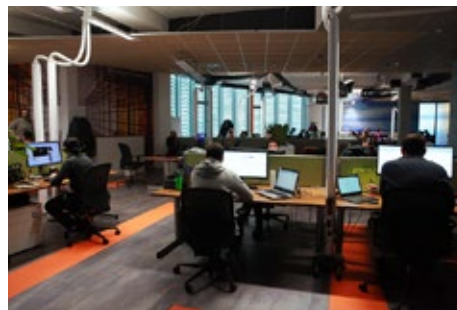
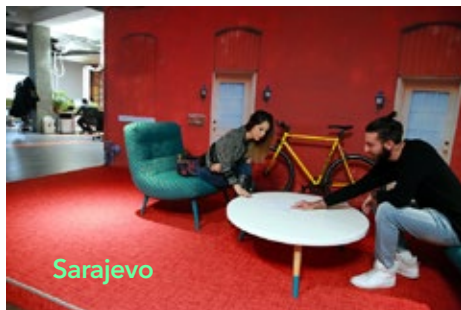
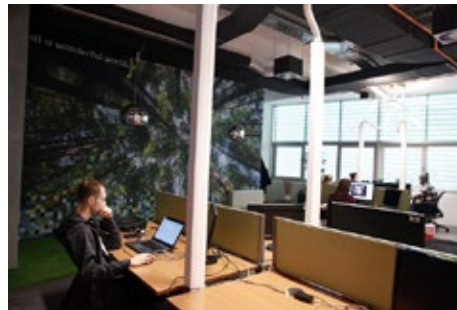


Inspiring offices

Amid loud clapping and camera flashes, we officially cut ribbons at four different locations in 2016.

Indeed, our own in-house creatives have envisioned some very cozy and

inspiring sights for other colleagues, be they in our brand new or fully renovated offices in Boston, Manila, Maribor or Sarajevo.



Work life balance

Many among us raise families and balance their needs with work schedules, with Company support.

In the spring of 2016, during the school holidays in Slovenia, we organized supervised daytime outings for our employees' children. The little ones loved the fun activities and the parents were perfectly at ease, knowing their kids were both safe and entertained. Around Easter, we regaled the little ones with festive arts & crafts indoors.

In the Fall, it was the CodeWeek workshop that attracted many of our youngest Comtraders. Five of our offices marked this Europe-wide initiative in October: Banja Luka, Belgrade, Kragujevac, Ljubljana and Sarajevo.

Our annual Family Day in Belgrade excelled in mood, food, sports and fun.



[CodeWeek workshop](#) →



[Nick Vujicic's visit and lecture](#) →



[Santa visits Comtrade](#) →

Santa was on hand in Belgrade, Kragujevac, Sarajevo and Ljubljana, to give out presents to delighted kids.

[Family Day](#) →

Most importantly, we looked after our own people in various ways. Everyone's health and wellbeing were, as always, our top priority. We arranged for a fee-of-charge ophthalmological checkup for the staff of our Belgrade facility. Our new

tech center in Maribor has a fully equipped massage room, with a professional masseur on call. And we were a proud sponsor of Nick Vujicic's visit and lecture in April, an uplifting, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The background of the slide features a close-up of two hands, one from a darker-skinned person and one from a lighter-skinned person, joined at the fingers to form a heart shape. The hands are set against a warm, golden-brown sunset sky with soft, out-of-focus light spots. The overall mood is one of unity and care.Two overlapping teal squares are positioned to the left of the text. The top square is smaller and partially overlaps the bottom square, which is larger and contains the text.

Philanthropy
Learning Projects
Sponsorships

Philanthropy

Philanthropy was important to us in 2016, as we supported many causes and individuals. We gave blood to the blood bank every four months. We donated funds to organizations working with the less fortunate – the SOS phone line for women and children, a youth shelter, NGOs helping children with disabilities, local sports clubs, schools in underprivileged areas, and animal shelters.

We also supported - with cash, equipment or scholarship donations - several individuals with severe health challenges.

Our experts travelled extensively to visit STEM schools and share the knowledge they gained at international conferences.



We also awarded the best among their students with cool prizes. We sponsored entire events – e.g. the Math Olympics, the Software Security Month and the National Mechanical Engineering Schools' Competition.

In support of the global initiative to open the IT sector to more women, a couple of years back we launched the Comtrade Scholarship for Women, in partnership with the Faculty of Computer and Information Science, University of Ljubljana.

Its first milestone was reached in the summer of 2016, when its first recipient, a graduate student from Serbia, got her Master's degree in Ljubljana.



College Bound Dorchester, a non-profit organization in Boston, USA, is an intervention program helping a thousand kids - former high-school students - finish school, get into college and develop into future young leaders. As a sponsor, Comtrade is represented on its Board and actively promotes the initiative in local and international media.

[College Bound Dorchester →](#)

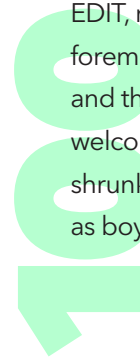
Learning Projects

Knowledge Factory, likely the largest regional educational event, in 2016 attracted over 3000 students of all ages.

[Knowledge Factory →](#)



EDIT, now in its 20th year and Europe's foremost free IT school, reached even Dublin and thus grew to 7 cities in 4 countries, welcoming over 100+ students. This time we shrunk the gender gap - almost as many girls as boys shared the two-week experience.



[EDIT →](#)



We sponsored a popular exhibition dedicated to Nikola Tesla - The Man of the Future, held in Ljubljana from April through December. The exhibition was opened by the President of Slovenia.

[Nikola Tesla - The Man of the Future](#) →

Sponsorships

In addition to our traditional educational commitments, as well as ICT conferences we support both financially and through expertise - in 2016 we sponsored cultural events with great public appeal.

We supported the Belgrade Irish Festival and the Days of Ireland in Ljubljana.



[Belgrade Irish Festival](#) →

Fun

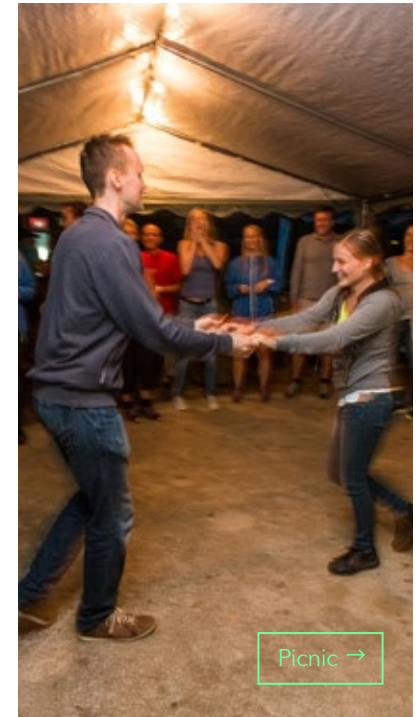
The background image shows a lively event in a large hall. A woman in a black and silver sequined dress is performing on a stage with red lighting. A large crowd of people is dancing and socializing in the background. The ceiling is high with visible lighting rigs and star-shaped decorations. The overall atmosphere is festive and energetic.

Team Building
Celebrations

Team building

We had too many team-building activities in 2016 to list here. We started in Slovenia in February and finished in Spain in December.

[Team building](#) →



[Picnic](#) →

Celebrations

VIPs and officials attended the openings of our new spaces in Boston, Manila, Maribor and Sarajevo.

Our offices in Kragujevac and Banja Luka marked their 10th anniversaries.

The Sarajevo tech center hosted a large crowd gathered to celebrate its 20th anniversary and its complete redesign.

Two decades of EDIT were a perfect opportunity to assemble its alumni at a garden party in Ljubljana.



Busy as ever, we nearly missed the end-of-the year mark, but then took time to celebrate 25 years in business, at a much talked-about New Year's party in Belgrade, with gusto and record attendance.

[New Year's party](#) →



What a Year!

