



DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR 2013–2020

Create your future!

1

Key words:

Innovation ecosystem

Integration

Quality development

Sustainability and social responsibility

Maribor, November 2013

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the Development Strategy is to determine the path to success – the fulfilment of our vision outlined, embraced and adopted in 2012. Although the vision is briefly described – to become a globally recognized innovation ecosystem inspiring the creativity of both employees and students – it incorporates a complex system of different goals ranging from establishing a creative link between scientific research and teaching and encouraging active participation in addressing key challenges at local, regional, national and global level to the desire to attain these objectives in a specific manner – with a lot of creativity and joy, i.e. in a friendly environment promoting cooperation and wellbeing.

On the basis of an analysis of the current situation and the self-evaluation process related to the national institutional accreditation and the international institutional evaluation, the University of Maribor formulated its long-term development strategy by taking into account strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and risks.

Key development guidelines are based on:

- mission and vision with regard to development;
- achieving scientific and development excellence;
- a more efficient structure and organization of study programmes, greater complementarity of study programmes, electivity, internal mobility and achieved competencies;
- establishing a collaborative partnership with students;
- encouraging internationalisation of higher education and enhancing international visibility;
- accomplishing the third mission – knowledge transfer and cooperation with the local environment, broader region and international community in order to become a sustainable and socially responsible university;
- development of support activities for a more efficient attainment of strategic goals
- promoting quality culture to the largest extent possible.

Over the next seven years, the Development Strategy 2013–2020 will represent our guiding principle and deep commitment.

2 MISSION AND VISION

MISSION

The mission of the University of Maribor is based on honesty, curiosity, creativity, freedom of spirit, cooperation and knowledge transfer in the field of science, art and education. Concerned with mankind and sustainable development, the University of Maribor expands knowledge, raises awareness, and promotes humanistic values as well as the culture of dialogue, quality of life and global justice.

VISION

The University of Maribor shall become a globally recognized **innovation ecosystem** inspiring the creativity of both employees and students.

SLOGAN

Create your future!

3 CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 STRENGTHS

In the sixties, the establishment of higher education institutions of the University of Maribor (UM) was linked to the economic needs of the environment and the city's industrial development. The University was an important driving force of positive regionalism in the country and facilitated cross-border cooperation, which enhanced its international visibility.

At the turn of the century, new scientific and artistic disciplines were developed by establishing new faculties. Thus, UM became a comprehensive institution with approximately 20,000 students and 1800 employees at 17 faculties and the University Library and Student Dormitories as associated members.

The University is successfully developing all basic scientific fields enabling the formation of interdisciplinary research teams able to produce outstanding scientific and artistic achievements. Thus, the University is establishing a creative working environment – an innovation ecosystem – with the purpose of ensuring sustainable and socially responsible development based on a collaborative partnership with students.

In the period between 2004 and 2009, study programmes were reformed in accordance with the Bologna principles. Thus, cooperation between higher education institutions with regard to joint programmes, student and staff mobility, and the recognition of qualifications for the needs of the labour market were promoted. The University of Maribor thus contributed to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area based on cultural and linguistic diversity as well as equality.

One of the University's strengths is also the active participation of students in management processes and bodies, which contributes to a positive relationship between students and the remaining academic community and represents one of the advantages with regard to innovative development of pedagogy.

The advanced library information system composed of the University Library and specialized libraries located at faculties provides efficient support for scientific research as well as the teaching and learning process. The University Library Maribor is the second largest Slovene library with an important university-oriented, national and regional role and a rich historical and modern collection. Therefore, the Library represents an excellent basis for the functioning of the University.

3.2 WEAKNESSES

The University's history suggests that priority study fields were developed in accordance with the needs of the local environment and national interests, which resulted in the establishment of new faculties. Due to a lack of cooperation between faculties, duplication of certain study programmes and research studies occurred – overworked employees were the consequence. During the past ten years, there was a lack of cooperation with prospective employers, which is evident from the content of reformed study programmes. Some of the faculties established in the last period lack adequate library information support for students.

Scientific research at faculties is unbalanced. Faculties engaged in natural sciences and engineering achieve satisfactory research results, while faculties in the field of social sciences and humanities focus almost entirely on pedagogy.

One of the most serious weaknesses is the current funding method, which negatively influences long-term development planning and the attainment of primary development goals. University funding is not based on actual running costs. The current legal framework envisages overhead funding only for educational activities but not for scientific research or artistic activities. Project funding is not sufficient and can lead to an unfair distinction between different scientific disciplines. In addition, this type of funding is extremely unstable, which makes planning extremely difficult.

Due to inadequate funding, the University cannot plan spatial development in a balanced manner, which is reflected in spatial inadequateness and dispersal of faculties.

In the past, there was no clear policy concerning human resources development, which is evident in the inadequate classification of posts and discrepancies between an employee's faculty rank and post. In terms of promotions, insufficient attention was devoted to both the quality and significance of employees' work for the development of scientific and artistic disciplines.

3.3 OPPORTUNITIES

The University of Maribor is aware of the importance of improvements and the development of a comprehensive quality assurance and monitoring system in line with national and European guidelines and standards. For this purpose, an efficient decision-making system on the basis of adopted strategic goals and development potential must be established.

An integrated university system will produce stronger synergistic effects with regard to the development of interdisciplinary research and study programmes. In this manner, the University will increase knowledge transfer, electivity and the efficiency of human resources. The process of institutional and programme interoperability requires the balancing of responsibilities and powers, while taking into account the University's autonomy.

On the basis of research references, the University endeavours to secure a larger amount of European funds for research programmes and equipment. For this reason, considerable emphasis is placed on the transfer of research findings and artistic achievements to the environment, esp. by increasing cooperation between faculties and by means of networking with industrial partners with regard to the establishment of consortiums participating in the European Research Area. Networking with various social actors both in Slovenia and abroad will be encouraged as well.

The University of Maribor is aware of the fact that the development strategy concerning both the teaching and learning process must be formulated in cooperation with the environment and that study programmes must be reformed in accordance with the needs of the environment. Only in this manner, students will gain a competitive advantage on the labour market. The establishment of a comprehensive system of lifelong learning also holds great unfulfilled potential.

The University of Maribor could assume a leading role in priority research fields, education, promoting sustainability and social responsibility in the Danube Region, Central Europe and Western Balkans and in terms of cross-border cooperation. In addition, the University could increase student and staff mobility. The University can become a central actor influencing unsuitable legislative provisions, e.g. limitations concerning the use of foreign languages in educational curricula.

International reputation and cooperation within the institution represent a good opportunity for the development of joint study programmes, projects and partnerships that could put the University on the map of the global higher education system.

Modern times and the University's vision require the development of new services and improvement of existing support services for a more efficient attainment of strategic objectives.

By setting a good example and through active involvement, the University of Maribor can establish an innovative environment and an efficient organization contributing to a high-quality, balanced, sustainable and socially responsible development of the institution itself, the city and the country at large.

3.4 RISKS

The University of Maribor is a comprehensive higher education institution of national importance influencing national policies and the development of regional policies across Slovenia as well as economic and social development of Eastern Slovenia. During the last few years, the execution of its mission has been at risk since its development has not been systematically incorporated into a comprehensive concept of higher education and Slovenia's strategic development.

The most serious risk for the University's autonomous development poses unstable, non-systematic and inadequate funding hindering efficient operation. Without decisions concerning development as well as agreements with regard to systemic funding of higher education, the University's independent development and the future of coming generations might be at risk. Under such circumstances, favourable conditions for brain drain are created, which negatively impacts the development of the University, the city and the country.

The University of Maribor is a part of the European Research and Higher Education Area, where it is faced with a dynamic flow of knowledge and information as well as movement of workers (both students and staff). A considerable risk for the University's competitiveness presents the inefficient organization and poor interoperability of the university system. Weak internal institutional interaction between faculties and activities does not lead only to the irrational use of resources and low interoperability but also to managerial problems.

Unfortunately, being aware of weaknesses will not be enough. In order to achieve academic maturity and establish a quality culture in the context of scientific disciplines and study programmes, these weaknesses must be minimized. Incompetence and indecisiveness with regard to important strategic decisions and unwillingness to assume personal responsibility represent a serious threat for the attainment of strategic objectives.

4 ACADEMIC ORIENTATION

4.1 ORGANIZATION AND INTEROPERABILITY

The University of Maribor is aware of the importance of improvements and the development of a comprehensive quality assurance and monitoring system in line with national and European guidelines and standards. For this purpose, an efficient decision-making system on the basis of adopted strategic goals and development potential must be established.

An integrated university system will produce greater synergistic effects with regard to the development of university members. In this manner, knowledge and assets will be successfully combined. Institutional and programme interoperability requires the balancing of responsibilities and powers, while taking into account the University's autonomy.

Strategic goals will be attained through:

- greater integration of the university system;
- optimization of university organisation;
- socially responsible planning of enrolment;
- an efficient decision-making system;
- stable funding and a stimulating division of assets.

4.2 TEACHING

In the following years, the University of Maribor will create an educational setting increasing the quality of teaching and helping students to develop their full potential, while responding to the needs of the environment by means of knowledge and skills required for progress, growth and sustainable development of society. Considering the trends in higher education, the University of Maribor will focus on high quality teaching and learning with a smaller number of students under a smaller number of more optimally designed study programmes. Special attention will be devoted to increasing the quality of graduate studies (esp. doctoral programmes) and the development of lifelong learning.

Strategic goals with regard to teaching:

- long-term development of study programmes;
- socially responsible planning of enrolment;
- use of innovative teaching methods and an advanced educational settings as well as student-centred learning;
- improved quality of doctoral programmes and the establishment of a doctoral school;
- establishment of a lifelong learning system.

4.3 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND ART

The University's mission in the field of research and development, innovation and art is to acquire, preserve and disseminate knowledge through the formation of interdisciplinary research teams able to produce outstanding scientific and artistic achievements, manage research and art projects, participate in international networks and centres of excellence, thus enabling the active participation of students in R&D and artistic endeavours, contributing to the development of society, addressing global challenges and encouraging economic development of the region and the wider environment.

In order to implement the scientific, artistic, research and development strategy based on Slovenia's Research and Innovation Strategy 2011-2020, strategic documents of Europe 2020, Horizon 2020 and other leading European initiatives, the following is of key importance:

- achieving scientific and artistic excellence as well as sustainable, socially responsible and high-quality development of scientific disciplines, fields and subfields, while considering the smart specialisation principle;
- establishing and developing the Research and Arts Zone of the University of Maribor (RAZ:UM) for an efficient transfer of research findings and artistic achievements to the environment;
- developing and establishing an infrastructure centre of the University of Maribor – Innovative Open Technologies (IOT) – LAB:UM;
- promoting open access to scientific documents, data and research results.

4.4 HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Human resources development is one of the University's highest priorities. Therefore, the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers 2010-2014 has been adopted. The European Commission confirmed that the measures adopted are in line with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the European Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers by awarding the logo "HR Excellence in Research".

On the basis of an internal analysis and the recommendations of both SQAA (Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) and EUA evaluators, European guidelines and the national legislation, the following strategic goals were defined for the period 2014–2020:

- promoting both academic values and the development of professional practice and ethical codes;
- human resources development;
- active recruitment policy;
- ensuring adequate working conditions and social security;
- developing a university culture.

In addition, the University will continue to support the efforts of the European Commission in the field of human resources management in public research organizations.

4.5 STUDENTS

Over 20,000 students attend the University of Maribor. They are represented by student councils of faculties. The highest student body is the Student Council of the University of Maribor chaired by the Vice Rector for Student Affairs. In addition to its role laid down by the law, Statute and other internal acts, the Councils is in charge of a wide range of extracurricular activities complementing the study offer with cultural, social, sports, educational and entertainment projects aimed at heightening the sense of belonging and providing a comprehensive educational experience.

In the future, the University of Maribor endeavours to expand the extracurricular offer encouraging personal development of students, while improving institutional support for the work of student representatives.

Strategic goals in the field of student activities:

- comprehensive personal development of students;
- participation in quality monitoring;
- student mobility;
- active participation in educational, research and artistic activities;
- participation in a wide range of extracurricular activities.

4.6 INTERNATIONALISATION

In the period up to 2020, the University of Maribor will focus on increasing its international visibility in the field of education, scientific research and art.

Strategic goals in the field of internationalisation:

- increasing the University's international visibility;
- developing joint study programmes and courses in a foreign language;
- active participation in international bilateral and regional networks and associations;
- encouraging international student and staff mobility;
- implementing study programmes abroad.

4.7 QUALITY CULTURE

The University of Maribor will promote a positive and creative atmosphere filled with thrust and responsibility, which are necessary for maintaining a high degree of autonomy. At the same time, responsibilities and powers with regard to decision making must be properly balanced. One of the key goals is to ensure an efficient decision-making system, a system for the implementation of the development strategy as well as a system for the introduction of required changes for increasing the University's excellence and reputation.

Strategic goals in the field of quality development:

- establishing a comprehensive internal institutional quality monitoring and assurance system in line with strategic priorities;
- implementing continued national and international institutional and programme evaluations and accreditations enhancing the University's international reputation and visibility;
- strengthening the role of the Quality Development Centre in charge of both the internal and external institutional and programme quality system and the establishment of a continuous training system with regard to quality monitoring and assurance and raising awareness of the importance of quality culture, social responsibility and sustainable development;
- strengthening the role of quality assessment committees at faculties and the Quality Assessment Committee of the Senate of the University of Maribor in order to increase their visibility and active involvement.

4.8 INTEGRATION INTO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The University must come up with new innovative solutions contributing to both sustainable development and social responsibility of individuals, public, private governmental and non-governmental organizations and the economy at the local and global level. The University has a huge potential due to the discovery of new knowledge – and with great power comes great responsibility. Therefore, the University is obliged to organize itself in such a manner as to encourage curiosity, honesty, freedom of thought, cooperation and intensive knowledge exchange in the field of education, scientific research and art within the institution itself as well as between the University and its environment.

Strategic goals:

- taking into account the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development in all activities conducted by the University;
- improving the University's cooperation with its environment and inviting external stakeholders to participate in the formulation of strategic decisions of the University and its members;
- influencing development potentials of both the city and region;
- influencing regional development in terms of social activities, culture and sports;
- strengthening the role of the Career Centre and alumni clubs;
- including the University Library Maribor in the development of long-term and dynamic relations with users and the broader local and regional environment.

4.9 SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

The strategy on spatial development is based on sustainable construction and renovation with the purpose of establishing functionally improved, ambient and interconnected energy self-sufficient spatial units (sustainable areas).

The University's spatial development will be based on predefined conditions of operation in the context of the following strategic goals:

- Urban spatial integration:
 - bringing available spatial capacities in line with the needs of faculties;
 - facilitating and encouraging cooperation between the University and municipalities;
 - participation of UM representatives in municipal working bodies.

- Development of infrastructure:

New constructions and reconstructions of university buildings will be conducted through a high-quality integration of sustainable university areas into an urban settlement and the establishment of functionally recognizable urban spatial axes: the axis of education and science and the axis of art.

- Sustainable rearranging of infrastructure:
 - energy-efficient reorganization of buildings;
 - establishment of sustainable areas (SA).

4.10 IT SUPPORT

Timely, relevant and clearly presented information are necessary for an efficient decision-making system. For this reason, effective, safe, reliable and comprehensive IT support for both the academic community and the development of an integrated institution is one of the University's top priorities.

Strategic goals in the field of IT support:

- ensuring high-quality IT support for primary processes and activities;
- ensuring high-quality IT support for support and managerial processes;
- establishing an efficient ICT infrastructure management system;
- improving business continuity.

5 ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan will be formulated on the basis of concrete and measurable strategic goals defined on the basis of the adopted comprehensive strategy of the University of Maribor for the period 2013–2020.

The Action Plan will also represent the basis for the distribution of resources.