

SUMMARY OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR

according to Article 31 of the Scientific Research and Innovation Activities Act (ZZrID)

The University of Maribor (UM) **strategically manages its research activity (RA)** within the UM Strategy 2021–2030 and stable funding (SF) objectives. The self-evaluation for the period 2022–25 confirms alignment between objectives, the implementation plan, and achieved results, as well as the internal consistency and reality of the strategic framework. The orientations are based on strengthening research excellence and international comparability, interdisciplinarity, internationalization and societal impact, alongside the development of HR, research infrastructure (RI) and support environment. They incorporate the principles of ethics and integrity, equal opportunities and open science (OS), and are guided by efforts to ensure stable systemic funding. Most indicators are being implemented in line with the planned dynamics through 2027. The main challenges stem from limited SF. The self-evaluation system is institutionalized, and stakeholder involvement is comprehensive.

UM demonstrates an internationally comparable level of **scientific excellence**, based on high scientific productivity and publication quality. It is characterized by interdisciplinarity and horizontal integration of research fields, enabling a critical mass of knowledge and resources at the intersections of traditional research domains and strengthening UM's research competitiveness. Opportunities lie in further strengthening top research, internationalization, RI, and HR. An additional challenge is ensuring conditions for the long-term development of research programs (RPs) and expanding the involvement of (early-stage) researchers in RPs, particularly in the context of financial constraints. UM addresses this through the implementation of (interdisciplinary) program and creative cores.

UM implements the **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers and an Action Plan** in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Professional support for international schemes is developed. Weaknesses include limited funding, fragmented HRM, and insufficient information support for KPI monitoring. Opportunities lie in diversifying funding, upgrading systems, internationalization and transferring European practices. Challenges include unstable funding, an uncompetitive national salary system and legislative and administrative constraints. UM plans to develop a more comprehensive HR policy, strengthen support, internationalization and dialogue with funders.

Research infrastructure (RI) supports top-level research and collaboration with the environment, also through open-access RI. A weakness is insufficient funding for maintenance and upgrades. Both opportunities and challenges lie in investments and further expansion of open access (OA). Measures include monitoring UM's infrastructure needs, preparing an application to increase the institutional funding pillar (IFP) and connecting with complementary national and European investment sources for co-funding RI.

In **collaboration, knowledge transfer and funding diversification**, UM strengthens professional support to increase participation and success in project applications and maintains a developed knowledge transfer system with measurable impacts. Weaknesses include lower success rates in certain types of calls (e.g., ERC). Opportunities lie in partnerships with leading consortia and SF, while risks include increasing competition, limited SF, restrictive rules for university participation in innovation calls, complex commercialization procedures and high intellectual property costs. Measures focus on further strengthening professional support (research management—RM projects), partnerships, training and funding.

The strengths of the **internal RA quality assurance system** include long-term implementation, a standardized system aligned with legislation, integrated into formal decision-making bodies and advisory structures. Opportunities include harmonizing self-evaluation procedures for university RA

under ZZrID and NAKVIS and further digitalization. Planned measures include simplifying procedures, upgrading IT support and training.

Strengths in the field of **OS at UM** include a comprehensive system (regulatory framework, digital infrastructure (DKUM, BRiUM, UM Preprints, etc.), support networks, active participation in formal initiatives, training system, data stewardship, open publishing, and more). Weaknesses exist in implementation: researcher motivation is lower, the uptake of open practices is limited and systemic financial incentives are low. Opportunities include further upgrades based on existing activities and more advanced integration of OS (ARRA, digital tools), along with strengthened external collaboration. Threats stem from traditional evaluation approaches and limited funding, which also hinder HR development. Measures include adopting the UM ARRA action plan, expanding diamond OA, and securing additional incentive/funding mechanisms.

In the areas of **equal opportunities, ethics and integrity**, UM has adopted key documents and strengthened support mechanisms. In equal opportunities, the new 2026–2030 action plan represents both an opportunity and a key measure. In ethics and integrity, UM has established a Code of Ethical Conduct, defined procedures and institutional and educational support. The UM Ethics Committee faces challenges in certain complex cases due to limited expertise and experience in assessing violations pertaining to ethics and integrity in RA. Opportunities, and consequent measures, lie in training involved staff and raising awareness among researchers.

The overall assessment of the self-evaluation is that UM has a clear development orientation, an established institutional environment and significant research potential; however, for long-term consolidation it is crucial to ensure greater stability of funding and define responsible actors, timelines, and measurable progress indicators for key improvements in 2026–2027.

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