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**UNIVERSITY OF NOVO MESTO**

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**Strategic Plan of the Higher Education Institution**

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**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NOVO MESTO FROM 2021  
TO 2030**

## **Foreword**

The establishment of a university in southeastern Slovenia is of exceptional importance owing to its geostrategic position and the highly economically developed region, which is in need of highly educated experts. When our first higher education institution was being created more than twenty years ago, the educational structure of the population was considerably below the Slovenian average. By including the population in the full-time and part-time studies in the existing eighteen study programmes at the university, we have significantly improved the educational structure, which is our greatest achievement.

The University of Novo Mesto (UNM) strives for scientific excellence in research and teaching. We are permanently developing modern learning and teaching methods, which stem from the advancement of higher education didactics and are student-centred. As a rule, the processes of teaching the course contents are digitally supported.

UNM is a scientific, educational and intellectual hub. UNM organises international scientific meetings, cultural events and round tables that discuss the current problems in our society in a critical, tolerant, open and free way.

At UNM we are setting up a lifelong learning system, so we can empower a wide range of people with the latest findings in science.

We view knowledge as the key production factor and an increasingly important asset that provides a major contribution to the development of society; for this reason, UNM is collaborating on and supporting the initiative Družba 5.0/Society 5.0. in Slovenia in accordance with our strategy.

UNM constantly highlights the need to raise the quality of pedagogical and research work, and the need to internationalise and digitise the processes in higher education.

One objective highlighted by UNM is the effort to achieve a balanced technological and humanistic development in the region and in society at large.

The development and survival of the university requires a sufficient number of students enrolled in the current quality study programmes; we examine this earnestly and responsibly through internal self-evaluations and periodic external evaluations by independent experts from the National Commission for the Quality of Higher Education.

By investing our own resources in providing the necessary material and staff conditions for implementing activities, we have achieved stability in both areas; that is why, in the future, we will be able to focus most of our time and energy on the organisation, assurance and monitoring of the quality of implementation of educational and scientific research work and of other processes.

## **Brief history of development**

The development of higher education in the Dolenjska region progressed slowly. There was no institution that would oversee the development of higher education in the region, so that was up to individuals who had a vision of establishing higher education institutions which would satisfy the needs of the developing economy. After the attainment of independence in 1991, the demographic picture of the wider Dolenjska region was rather unfavourable. Less than half of the region's population was employed; the educational structure of employees with tertiary education in Slovenia was 8.9%, but much lower in our region (2–4%). Until 1994 the establishment of higher education

organisations fell under the exclusive competence of the state. However, when the first independent higher education institutions were established in the country, ideas emerged to accelerate the development of higher education.

The vision of establishing a university began with the accreditation of the higher education institution in 1997 and the accreditation of the first first-cycle professional higher education study programme

Business and Management. In January 1998 began intensive staff, material and other preparations, so we could welcome the first generation of full-time and part-time students in October 1998 at renovated facilities with eight full-time employees. We adopted our corporate identity, for which we are still known today, from *situlae art* which was present in our parts in the age of Celts.

By 2006, when the Bologna study programmes were introduced, we had gradually established the first-cycle professional higher education study programme Business and Management. We obtained a concession for full-time studies and the Erasmus Charter. The enrolment of students at the central school and at remote departments (Ljubljana, Maribor and Celje) was exceptional. By building a new annex, we gained c. 2000 m<sup>2</sup> of space; together with the renovated section, it provided very good spatial conditions for the implementation of new study programmes. The programme Business and Management underwent a pilot external evaluation, which confirmed our successful work and gave us impetus for realising new ideas.

By 2012, we were among the first in the country to have accredited two new Bologna study programmes in Nursing Care, one in Mechanical Engineering and one in Information Science; we also modernised the existing study programmes. We strengthened our staff structure, prepared applications for the accreditation of new study programmes in the first, second and third cycles, and for the transformation of colleges into faculties. We started introducing a new organisation as part of the Higher Education Centre, which represented the origins of the university. That meant joint management and administrative services, optimised work of employees and use of facilities, a transition to computerised documentation, etc. Several external evaluations were conducted, which were successful and enabled us to keep our concessions.

In the following years, we primarily developed the programmes in the second and third cycles; improved the staff structure and the ICT equipment of facilities; enlarged the library funds; increased our publishing activities and international cooperation; raised the level of scientific research work. We began preparing applications for the accreditation of the university, which was completed successfully in 2018. The university includes four faculties with accredited study programmes in all three cycles, in four scientific research disciplines, and in five educational areas. In 2020 we gained c. 1000 m<sup>2</sup> of space for the implementation of the study programme Physiotherapy and of other programmes. The available spatial capacity of c. 4500 m<sup>2</sup> is sufficient for the current implementation of educational and scientific research work. The university has acquired all facilities with its own resources.

## **Mission**

UNM is becoming one of the national centres of science, the main driving force of the autonomous, intellectual, moral, cultural and economic potential of the region and beyond. It is realising its mission through the dedicated and science-supported work of all its employees and students. Its performance is evidenced by its achievements in the fields of education, scientific research and business. By committing itself to excellence in education

and research, it is making a major contribution to the development of society, to the quality of life of individuals, and to the sustainable development of the environment.

## **Vision**

Owing to its educational, scientific and artistic activity and its active involvement in the local, Slovenian and international environment, UNM has been recognised in the Slovenian and international environment as a reputable higher education institution. Through versatile excellence, stimulating work and study conditions, high standards of academic culture and ethics, responsiveness to the current and future needs of society, equality and non-discrimination, fairness, inclusiveness and sustainably oriented activities, UNM will ensure long-term personal and social security, opportunities for intellectual development and creativity, and the creation of assets in accordance with the needs of Society 5.0.

## **Values**

The university connects the academic community of higher education teachers, researchers, students and other associates, and aims to make a name for itself at home and world-wide. Its activities are founded on the following values:

- Knowledge and innovativeness;
- High quality and academic excellence;
- Academic freedom;
- Autonomy in relation to the government, political parties, corporations and religious communities;
- Humanism and human rights;
- Sustainable development;
- Inclusiveness.

## **Slogan**

The slogan of the University of Novo Mesto is: Knowledge – the Potential of the Individual and of Society!

## **ORGANISATION**

UNM shall be transformed so that the university will take on all the rights and obligations of individual members. It will strengthen the collaboration between members of the university and through their synergistic operation realise its strategic objectives. It will join the efforts of the wider local environment to establish a public university by demonstrating a willingness to establish a public university on its foundations.

### **Strategic objectives:**

Development of new scientific and academic fields with the potential for the further development of the university.

Strengthen the collaboration between members of the university and through their synergistic operation realise its strategic objectives.

Members shall relinquish their legal personality and become its internal organisational units; the university shall take on all their rights and obligations.

Willingness to integrate with other higher education institutions and establish a public university on its foundations.

## **EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY**

UNM shall strengthen the quality and efficiency of education. It shall assert research-based education; increase the inclusion of innovative and flexible forms of teaching and learning in the study process; improve access to bibliographic databases for the quality retrieval of scientific and scholarly data. It shall modernise the study programmes to make them interesting to students and to address the challenges in society and the needs of the labour market. It shall respond to the needs of the environment by introducing a lifelong learning system and providing shorter forms of education in order to facilitate the transition to the labour market and a more sustainable development of society.

### **Strategic objectives:**

Modernisation and development of new study programmes.

Use of innovative and flexible forms of teaching and learning in accordance with European guidelines and increased cooperation between individual stakeholders (teachers, students, graduates and external partners).

Providing access to bibliographic databases.

## **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ACTIVITY**

Owing to its commitment to research excellence and the creation of a stimulating environment for achieving quality research results, UNM shall rival and productively collaborate with Slovenian and international research organisations on scientific research projects; it shall strengthen its activities for addressing local and global challenges together with local, national and international economic and non-economic organisations. It shall promote the publication of scientific articles in journals indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases, raise the level of quality of its journals, and continue with the quality organisation of international conferences.

### **Strategic objectives:**

Mutual collaboration between scientific research institutions or members of UNM with the aim to strengthen the synergistic effects of interdisciplinary integration of scientists working at UNM member faculties.

Increasing the number of publications of the results of the scientific research work of higher education teachers and associates at UNM, and increasing the international impact of scientific publications.

Organisation and implementation of international scientific conferences.

Raising the quality of the publication of scientific journals.

## **INTERNATIONALISATION**

UNM shall build on the system of collaboration between universities at the national and international level. It shall intensify the implementation of internationalisation activities at home to enable a larger number of students to gain intercultural experiences and competences. It shall promote the international mobility of employees and students in accordance with the UNM Internationalisation Strategy and the Erasmus+ priorities, such as greater autonomy for shortening the duration of procedural learning, digitalisation of communication, and striving for eco-friendly mobility.

### **Strategic objectives:**

Realising the objectives of the ECHE by implementing the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme.

Forming a network of strategic partnerships with select universities in the EU and beyond.

Strengthening collaboration with foreign higher education institutions.

Strengthening internationalisation activities at home (international pedagogical partnership, collaboration with foreign lecturers, summer schools and international projects).

## **STUDENTS**

UNM shall actively involve students in scientific research activity and provide quality practical training designed in cooperation with the economic and non-economic sectors. It shall enhance the system of student tutoring, of student career counselling, and of extra-curricular activities. It shall follow European trends in higher education, which highlight, among other things, quality student-centred teaching and learning.

### **Strategic objectives:**

Developing and promoting research activity among students by involving them in research and development work (collaboration on scientific research and development projects, co-organisation of student conferences and competitions). Enhancing the implementation of tutoring.

Promoting work with top students and involving them in scientific research work. Providing quality practical education designed in cooperation with the economic and non-economic sectors.

Strengthening the activities of the Career Centre to support students in their personal and professional development.

Student-centred teaching and learning.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

UNM shall systematically monitor and ensure quality work of the university and its members. It shall increase the importance of a culture of quality in all its activities.

**Strategic objectives:**

Ensuring a system of quality and strengthening the culture of quality in all activities.

Quality implementation of the study programmes of its members in terms of pedagogical excellence.

Developing a methodology for measuring quality and designing a set of representative indicators for ongoing monitoring of quality.

**INTEGRATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NOVO MESTO INTO THE ENVIRONMENT**

Through various means, UNM shall strengthen its bond with the environment in all areas of operation and co-create the region's development potential.

**Strategic objectives:**

Opening the university up to the wider community with events for the wider community (round tables, visiting lectures by local experts, workshops and contests for primary and secondary school students, popularisation of study programmes through works of art).

Linking up with economic and non-economic entities by implementing lifelong learning programmes; collaboration with practising mentors and companies; implementation of educational and promotional projects for secondary school students.

Organising lectures for the interested public and for professional associations and interest groups.

**ENSURING MATERIAL CONDITIONS**

UNM shall ensure suitable spatial and financial conditions for the quality operation of the university and its members, and shall follow the guidelines for investment in green infrastructure.

**Strategic objectives:**

Ensuring suitable spatial conditions for the quality operation of the university and its members.

Ensuring eco-conscious or sustainably oriented behaviour (making sure its operation has minimum adverse effects on the environment).

**IT SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S ACTIVITIES**

By modernising its technical/technological and other equipment for implementing the pedagogical and scientific research process, and for digitising the key operational processes at all levels, UNM shall optimise its operation and improve the user experience.

**Strategic objectives:**

Modernising the technical/technological and other equipment for implementing the pedagogical and scientific research process; enhancing the single information system and digitising processes.

Digitising the university at the key levels of its operation.

**STIMULATING WORK ENVIRONMENT**

UNM shall enhance the employee career management system and see to their personal and professional development. The university shall increase staff numbers also by supporting its graduates to continue their education under its study programmes and by encouraging them to build a career in higher education and in research activities.

**Strategic objectives:**

Increasing the university's staff numbers in accordance with its needs.

Encouraging graduates of the university to continue their studies.

Possibility of the academic development of promising graduates at the university in accordance with its needs.

**PROMOTION OF THE UNIVERSITY**

Through intensified promotional activities and based on achievements, UNM shall strengthen its positive public image.

**Strategic objectives:**

Increasing the recognisability of the university in the wider environment by organising open days; by participating in specialised higher education fairs; by informing secondary schools, companies' human resources departments, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of opportunities for enrolment in study programmes, etc.

## SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NOVO MESTO

### Strengths

- The university combines different scientific research disciplines from the field of social sciences, health sciences, natural sciences and technology;
- Creating knowledge that is adapted to the needs of the regional economy;
- Interdisciplinarity;
- A stable staff structure of qualified higher education teachers and researchers;
- Its own premises and good material conditions, modern laboratory and research equipment, and its own library;
- A small and dynamic university;
- Topical academic fields, and applicable and innovative course contents;
- Dynamic development of new study programmes;
- Increased interest in enrolment in study programmes;
- Young, creative, motivated and supportive teaching and non-teaching staff;
- Employee teamwork and work in smaller groups;
- A friendly and flexible attitude towards students;
- Modern forms of teaching;
- One-on-one work with students and a student-centred pedagogical process;
- The implementation of the pedagogical process is adapted to students, enabling them to balance their studies, work and family life;
- Established connections with economic and non-economic entities;
- Involving students in overcoming real challenges faced by economic and non-economic entities;
- Well-established involvement of practising experts in the pedagogical process;
- Good connections with higher education institutions abroad, especially in the Western Balkan area;
- Appropriate staff structure and providing support to increasing the employees' competences in their areas of operation;
- Good recognisability of the university in the local environment and building a reputation;
- Established activities for developing the competences of primary and secondary school students in the local environment and beyond, thus increasing the recognisability of the university and its study programmes;
- Studies in all three study cycles in different scientific disciplines;
- Organising different forms of study assistance for students – tutoring, workshops, additional tutorials, etc.;
- Established Career Centre for empowering students for their studies and for employment after the completion of studies (career guidance);
- Established system of monitoring the quality of the operation of the university and its members;
- High proportion of students involved in the university's scientific research work;
- Established cooperation with interest groups and development agencies in the local and regional environment (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Dolenjska and Bela krajina, Regional Chamber of Craft and Small Business Novo mesto, Development Centre Novo mesto, Regional Association of the Red Cross Novo mesto, Association of Nurses, Midwives and Health Care Technicians Novo mesto, the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, Slovenian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, etc.);
- Its own scientific journals and international scientific conferences, and co-organising the conferences of the partner institutions of the university and its members.

## **Weaknesses**

- Small number of enrolled students in certain study programmes;
- The success rate of applications for international projects, although it has been improving over the last two years;
- Not seizing the opportunities for the mobility and exchange of students and teaching staff;
- Not seizing the opportunities regarding the publication of results of scientific research work;
- Poor recognisability of the achievements of higher education teachers in the domestic and international environment (citation rate, publications with an impact factor);
- Postponing the completion of studies and studying for too long;
- Lack of student housing.

## **Opportunities**

- Working in the same environment as economic entities with a high added value and industries of the future;
- The university's environment striving to reduce regional differences and discrepancies;
- Educating the youth and employees in SE Slovenia – lower migration rate;
- Introducing innovative and flexible forms of teaching and learning into study programmes;
- Developing new study programmes, taking into account the demographic, technological, ecological and economic trends and the needs of the profession;
- Intensive digitisation of Slovenia and announcing the transition to Society 5.0, thus creating the opportunity to develop new study programmes;
- Increasing digitisation and robotisation of the work processes of economic and non-economic entities, and the increasing needs for highly educated staff;
- Intensifying the activities of alumni clubs and consequently linking up with successful graduates and involving them in the university's activities;
- Increasing the internationalisation of study programmes;
- Young people from Western Balkan countries are interested in studying in Slovenia so they can obtain a diploma from an EU country;
- Continuing our integrations with higher education institutions from countries from the Western Balkans and from Western and Central Europe;
- Local organisations endeavouring to become research organisations, which will improve our chances of applying for ARRS projects;
- Promoting entrepreneurial thinking and developing a supportive entrepreneurial environment;
- Promoting a lifelong learning culture;
- High education level of the local population and an opportunity to employ people from SE Slovenia.

## **Threats**

- Change in legislation (affecting existing concessions for implementing a public service in higher education);
- The local area not being aware of the role and importance of higher education;
- Unfair competition among higher education institutions in the area;
- A negative demographic trend accompanied by low economic activity;

- Our partners – other higher education institutions not honouring the concluded agreements;
- (Local) politics not in favour of the development of the university's study programmes;
- Irregular calls for new concessions, which is why we can enrol students in new study programmes only after the tuition fee has been paid;
- Losing staff or a lack of interest in becoming employed at the university as the salary system is unable to compete with that of the economic sector;
- Unpredictable social factors and not recognising knowledge as a value.

## **PEST ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NOVO MESTO**

### **Political environment**

- Not in favour of the establishment and development of private higher education institutions.
- Frequent changes to the legislation do not provide a stable legal framework for the university's operation.
- At the national level there is not enough opportunity for an active collaboration with private higher education institutions regarding legislation.
- Lack of opportunities for involving private higher education institutions in the creation of all important documents relating to higher education and research in the country.
- Lack of development strategies of individual sectors of the economy at the state level.
- Inappropriate social policy, resulting in limited access to studies for vulnerable population groups.
- Aspiration for fast and intensive digitisation of Slovenia, which would provide the opportunity to increase the number of students enrolled in study programmes.
- Changes in health care and social security, which would provide the opportunity to increase the number of students enrolled in study programmes.
- Adopting measures for protecting the environment, increasing the use of renewable resources and transitioning to a green/sustainable economy, which would provide the opportunity to increase the number of students enrolled in study programmes.
- An unstable political climate (frequent change of government or frequent elections), resulting in the adoption of unpredictable measures or legislative framework.
- Insufficient investment in higher education and scientific research work.
- High taxes on the income of natural persons, causing brain drain.
- An uncritical attitude towards corruption, clientelism and dishonest business practices.
- Underdeveloped public transportation, causing problems for students from remote places.
- (Local) politics not in favour of or not interested in developing the supportive environment needed to turn Novo mesto into a university town (development of the cultural programme, lack of housing for students, lack of extra-curricular activities, etc.).

### **Economic environment**

- In the labour market areas covered by the university's programmes we anticipate a labour supply-demand ratio in favour of the latter.
- A highly developed economic environment in which the university operates and a high added value of economic entities.
- Worsening economic circumstances due to events in international markets (pandemic,

war).

- An unregulated real estate market and the resulting problems faced by young people when trying to become independent, which reduces their motivation to study.
- Decreasing the population's purchasing power and thus reducing their chances of investing in education.
- Losing highly educated staff to environments with higher incomes and a smaller tax burden on salaries.
- Slovenia's inclusion in international integrations, which provide the opportunity to collaborate with international institutions in the field of education and scientific research, and the mobility of students and employees.
- A very small share of household expenses intended for education (merely 1%).

### **Sociocultural environment**

- The university is embedded in a specific border and multicultural environment.
- In the long run, demographic trends present a peculiar challenge for the university – on the one hand, a lower birthrate and the related threat of a reduced interest in enrolment; on the other hand, the ageing of the population and the resulting opportunity to implement lifelong learning programmes.
- Increasing awareness of the importance of caring for the environment and for sustainable production and consumption, which could result in an increased interest in enrolment in individual study programmes.
- Society's negative attitude towards employees in education and the related threat of a lack of staff.
- The university is gaining recognition in the local environment, which is evident in the fact that the local environment is showing an interest in its events.
- Employers being insufficiently aware of the fact that they are co-responsible for developing the competences of their employees.
- Revaluing society's values – reducing the value of knowledge.
- An altered lifestyle that prioritises instant gratification and immediate comfort.
- Insufficient appreciation of the services and products of the local environment and the related migrations of young people to larger cities.
- Little interest in migrations among the population of Slovenia and the resulting opportunity to increase interest in enrolment in the local environment.
- Improving the attitude towards entrepreneurial thinking and consequently the interest in the university's workshops.
- Distrust of government institutions.

### **Technological environment**

- The existence of a relatively large number of institutions at the national and regional level for supporting scientific and technological progress, promoting entrepreneurship, digitising business operations, and transitioning to a sustainable economy.
- Insufficient investments in digitisation and hence not reducing the gap between the most developed countries in the world quickly enough.
- Too slow introduction of the strategy for improving the digital literacy of the population and for digitising the economy.
- Good Internet coverage in Slovenia.
- A slow transition to eco-friendlier technologies and the resulting opportunity to increase interest in enrolment in individual study programmes.

- Technologically outdated public transportation, which is reducing the interest in enrolment among people from remote places.
- Insufficient investments in innovation and development and hence not reducing the lag behind the most developed countries quickly enough.

This document was adopted at the session of the Senate of the University of Novo Mesto on 6 June 2022 and of the Management Board of the University of Novo Mesto on \_\_\_\_ June 2022.

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