

# INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR – SOME EXAMPLES OF ACADEMIC COOPERATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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The chapter on internationalization at the University of Maribor examines key strategies and achievements in the institution's international collaboration over the decades. It highlights the transition from the university's initial steps in the international academic sphere to the development of robust programmes such as Erasmus and CEEPUS, which have significantly enhanced student and staff mobility. The university places a strong emphasis on integrating international students and developing study programmes in foreign languages, thereby strengthening its global presence. Internationalization is fostered across all areas of the university's operations, contributing to its academic excellence. The internationalization strategy, which incorporates intercultural content into the curriculum and enhances digital mobility, enables the University of Maribor to remain competitive and relevant in the dynamic global higher education and research landscape.

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## 1 Introduction

Internationalization of the University of Maribor represents one of the key elements in the university's development strategy (Univerza v Mariboru, 2021). This chapter outlines the broader contexts and dynamics of international collaborations that shape the university environment as a globally connected and interculturally rich hub of academic excellence. Aspects of the internationalization of research activities are addressed in a separate part of the monograph, as are the international components of educational and study programmes. Internationalization transcends individual areas and appears as a cross-cutting theme throughout all parts of this monograph, reflecting the fact that the University of Maribor, through various forms of international cooperation and openness strategies, contributes to shaping the global scientific and educational space.

## 2 The Concept of Internationalization at the University of Maribor

Internationalization of higher education has become an indispensable element of the modern university system, far beyond the mobility of students and professors. It represents a strategic approach to opening academic spaces to the global world. As the second-largest university in Slovenia, the University of Maribor has set specific goals in the field of internationalization, shaped in accordance with national guidelines on internationalization in higher education, its own needs, regional context, and global trends. Internationalization at the University of Maribor stems from its geographical and cultural position, which enables it to act as a bridge between the Central European and Southeast European academic spaces. In addition to regional partnerships, the university strengthens its global presence by establishing connections and partnerships with renowned universities and institutions worldwide and by integrating students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.

The development of the concept of internationalization at the University of Maribor is closely linked to the university's strategic documents, which have gradually defined its priorities and objectives. From its first participation in European mobility programmes in the 1990s to modern multidisciplinary projects with an international dimension, the University of Maribor has consistently strived to improve the quality of education and research through international cooperation. In the university's

strategy for the period 2021–2030, internationalization is recognized as a key tool for achieving global visibility and competitiveness (Univerza v Mariboru, 2021).

Internationalization of the university emphasizes both regional connections and global ambitions. Through the global impact of its research results, the inclusion of foreign students and researchers, and the development of globally relevant study programmes, the university aims to create a space that transcends national borders and enables creative engagement with global challenges. The University of Maribor thus strengthens its visibility, creates an environment where local needs and global trends intersect, and actively shapes Slovenia's role in the global academic space.

From an organizational perspective, major changes at the University of Maribor occurred with its accession to the European mobility programme Erasmus in 1999; at the rectorate, the Office for International and Inter-University Cooperation coordinated the work of Erasmus coordinators at the faculties. Over time, this office evolved into a department that centrally manages agreements and scholarships, while coordinators at the faculties handle academic aspects related to fulfilling study obligations for both University of Maribor students abroad and foreign students at the university.

### **3 Beginnings of International Cooperation (1975–1990)**

Although publications of the University of Maribor about its development in the first decades contain little mention of internationalization, it is evident that there was always significant discussion, even in the publication marking the end of the first decade of the then Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor, about comparing the university with trends and developments in the world and the international space (Kerin, 1985). It is therefore not surprising that the University of Maribor was one of the first signatories of the Magna Charta Universitatum on September 18, 1988, marking its entry into the international family of universities committed to autonomy in research, education, and innovation. Similarly, the conclusion of cooperation agreements with foreign universities shifted from more regional frameworks of the former Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries such as Austria, Hungary, and Italy to agreements with universities in the USA and China (Toplak et al., 2000). In general, international cooperation took place at the level of faculties and even through individual contacts between researchers and higher education teachers.

#### 4 Development of International Cooperation and Mobility (1991–2024)

After Slovenia's independence in 1991, internationalization was gradually incorporated into its higher education policies. However, before 2011, no specific national strategic document comprehensively addressed the internationalization of higher education. Nevertheless, during this period, important activities and reforms took place that promoted international cooperation and mobility in higher education.

One key milestone was Slovenia's inclusion in the Bologna Process, which began in 1999. The goal of this process was to establish a unified European Higher Education Area, requiring adjustments of the Slovenian higher education system to European standards and promoting international mobility of students and academic staff. Slovenia actively participated in this process, leading to reforms of study programmes and the introduction of the ECTS credit system.

In addition, since 1999 Slovenia has participated in various international programmes, such as the Erasmus programme, which enabled student and professor exchanges and thus contributed to the internationalization of education. During this period, Slovenian higher education institutions began to establish more intensive connections with international partners, leading to greater involvement in international research projects and networks. In more than 25 years of participation in this programme, the University of Maribor has been successfully involved in all phases. Today, participation in the programme requires obtaining the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, which represents a quality benchmark and a common standard for managing student and staff mobility. From the initial 18 outgoing and 87 incoming mobilities, the University of Maribor has grown to more than 300 outgoing and over 1,000 incoming mobilities annually (Univerza v Mariboru, 2024). This cooperation is realized through approximately 700 agreements within the Erasmus+ programme. Erasmus+ integrates several former EU programmes, primarily TEMPUS, in which the University of Maribor participated before Slovenia's EU membership as a country preparing for accession, and after joining the EU in 2005 as a member state university helping universities in former Yugoslav countries and post-Soviet states align with the European Higher Education Area. Another programme where the University of Maribor was the most successful institution in Slovenia was Leonardo da Vinci, aimed at practical training in industry

as part of studies. Through projects such as EUROSILLS and GRADEX, the University of Maribor offered 20 internships annually, which was previously not possible. Today, student mobilities for practical training take place under Erasmus+ KA 130 and 171, as well as Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education (KA 2). From the perspective of internationalization of postgraduate studies at the University of Maribor, the Erasmus Mundus, a sub-programme of Erasmus+, is of particular importance. In this programme, the University of Maribor was a partner in the JoinEU SEE project series, which ran for five cycles and brought master's and doctoral students from Western Balkan countries to the University of Maribor. At the level of Central and Southeastern Europe, the CEEPUS programme (Central and Eastern European Programme for University Studies) is also important for the University of Maribor, enabling student and staff mobility.

The first comprehensive National Higher Education Programme, adopted in 2002 (“Nacionalni program visokega šolstva Republike Slovenije (NPVS)”, 2002), emphasized the need for Slovenian universities to integrate into international flows. The programme highlighted the importance of participation in European educational and research networks and encouraged student and professor mobility, aiming to increase the competitiveness of Slovenian higher education internationally.

The Resolution of 2007 (Resolution on the National Higher Education Programme of the Republic of Slovenia 2007–2010) (“Resolucija o nacionalnem programu visokega šolstva Republike Slovenije 2007–2010 (ReNPVS)”, 2007) upgraded the previous programme with more concrete measures for internationalization. It stressed the importance of integrating Slovenian higher education institutions into the European Higher Education Area, primarily through the Bologna Process. It encouraged the development of joint study programmes with international partners and an increase in the number of foreign students in Slovenia.

The national consultation on the internationalization of higher education, held in February 2011, highlighted the University of Maribor's key orientation toward developing international cooperation and visibility during this period (Petrović Jesenovac, 2011). Ivan Rozman, then Rector of the University of Maribor and Vice-President of the Slovenian Rectors' Conference, emphasized that internationalization of higher education is a necessity and an “essential component” of the modern university system. He pointed out shortcomings in the national higher

education programme for 2007–2010 and noted that the new programme for 2011–2020 was more clearly defined. Its goal was to increase Slovenia’s attractiveness as a destination for study and for pedagogical, research, and professional work by foreign students and experts. At that time, Rector Ivan Rozman also mentioned that the share of exchange students at the University of Maribor was around 1.5%, but the university aimed to reach 10%. He stressed the importance of active membership in international networks and efforts to draw EU funds, while warning about international competition from universities that are better funded and more attractive to foreign students. In conclusion, he highlighted as one of the university’s long-term goals a breakthrough into the top 500 universities in the world.

The Resolution of 2011 (“Resolucija o Nacionalnem programu visokega šolstva (ReNPVŠ11-20)”, 2011) further strengthened the commitment to internationalization. It emphasized the need to increase international mobility of students and staff and participation in international research projects.

The University of Maribor continued to strengthen internationalization as an important strategic orientation during this period. Projects such as Internationalization – A Pillar of Development of the University of Maribor, implemented between 2013 and 2015, highlighted the importance of cooperation with foreign partners, attracting international students, and integrating international content into the educational process. The project was presented to the public by then Rector Danijel Rebolj at an event in March 2014, where the university’s efforts to increase global visibility and inclusion in the international academic space were emphasized (Univerza v Mariboru: Internacionalizacija visokega šolstva, 2014). These initiatives contributed to further strengthening the university’s role in this area.

In 2018, the University of Maribor took a decisive step forward by developing course units for incoming students on international mobility and preparing English-language study programmes. During this period, a catalogue of more than 1,300 courses was established, which is still offered to international students today. These courses became the foundation for incoming student mobility, which reached a record number in the academic year 2023/2024, namely more than 1,300 incoming students (Univerza v Mariboru, 2024). Additionally, support was provided for the development of five study programmes taught in English. This significantly

contributed to the broader accessibility and attractiveness of the university in the international higher education space.

In 2021, the University of Maribor expanded internationalization through several key initiatives. It created an ecosystem that fosters connections between domestic and international students, enhances intercultural competences and language skills through informal activities and the University of Maribor Summer School – Summer University. At the same time, the university strengthened its international visibility by participating in global associations and promoting itself in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. Internationalization of research includes hosting international researchers and involving doctoral students in global projects. The university also improved mobility frameworks that facilitate participation in exchanges, thereby strengthening the global research network and student integration.

The latest resolution, adopted in 2022 (“Resolucija o nacionalnem programu visokega šolstva do 2030 (ReNPVŠ30)”, 2022), continues the directions of previous documents but with greater emphasis on digitalization and sustainable development. Internationalization remains a key objective, aimed at improving the quality of education and research and enhancing the international competitiveness of Slovenian higher education.

Following this resolution, in 2023, the Strategy for Internationalization of Higher Education and Science in the Republic of Slovenia until 2030 was formulated (Direktorat za visoko šolstvo, n.d.), with the goal of making Slovenian higher education an integral part of the global higher education space, continuously improving its quality through cooperation with leading foreign institutions. The resolution emphasizes the inseparable link between the higher education and research space, where internationalization encompasses both student mobility and research collaboration, strengthening Slovenia’s global competitiveness. The University of Maribor implements this through the European University Network ATHENA, while also following the guidelines of the European Union. The resolution also highlights sustainable mobility and digital forms of cooperation, such as virtual mobility, which enables access to internationalization without physical presence – a concept that became particularly relevant during the pandemic. The resolution promotes two-way mobility. The University of Maribor successfully

encourages outgoing mobility for students by actively promoting and implementing short-term mobilities (Blended Intensive Programmes – BIPs).

The year 2024 ended with anticipation of the adoption of the Higher Education Act in 2025, which, despite divided opinions, placed internationalization more prominently in focus. In an article in *Večer* (Žišt, 2024), the Rector of the University of Maribor, Zdravko Kačič, emphasized, in the light of the amendment of the draft of this Act, that internationalization is a key element in the development of higher education, as it enables competitiveness in the European educational space and greater inclusion of Slovenian universities in international integration processes. He pointed out that Slovenian universities should have started developing study programmes in foreign languages, especially English, more than a decade ago, but the lack of appropriate legal frameworks caused delays that negatively affected their development potential. In his view, the new law brings significant improvements, as it allows teaching in a foreign language while ensuring Slovenian students' right to study in Slovenian. Zdravko Kačič also highlighted the inconsistency of the previous system, which emphasized the protection of the Slovenian language only in spoken form, while study literature was often in foreign languages. According to him, this practice reflects an unfair interpretation of the constitutional right to study in one's mother tongue. The Rector believes that the new Act offers an opportunity for more intensive development of internationalization and alignment with European standards, which is crucial for strengthening the quality and reputation of Slovenian higher education in the international arena.

## **5 A Palette of Diversity: Internationalization at Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities**

### **5.1 The Perspective of the Faculty of Economics and Business**

The Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Maribor (EPF UM) views internationalization as a fundamental pillar of development and recognition in the global academic space. Today, the faculty has a clearly defined Internationalization Strategy for the period 2022–2030 (Ekonomsko poslovna fakulteta Univerze v Mariboru, 2023), which includes seven priority strategic goals for internationalization, designed to strengthen global engagement and international presence through defined development objectives, tactics for achieving them, and

key performance indicators. These strategic goals reflect the faculty's commitment to expanding global influence, promoting internationalization, and continuously improving the quality of education in economics and business studies, aligned with international standards, while fostering principles of sustainability and a culture of quality.

### **5.1.1 Internationalization and Excellence in Economics and Business Studies**

International professional accreditations in economics and business studies are specific to education in this field, and without them, a modern business school cannot position itself on the map of excellence in business and economic education. In the area of international accreditations, which the faculty sees as a pathway to excellence, EPF UM has been a pioneer among social sciences faculties. The importance of international accreditations at EPF UM has been recognized since 1989, when the first activities began to introduce an international study programme and establish the International Postgraduate School of Management with the international study programme Business Management and Organization – MBA, which was launched in 1990 (Hauptman & Oplotnik, 2019). The significance of benchmarking against the best was acknowledged even then; the MBA study programme at EPF received its first international accreditation in 1996 from the European Council for Business Education (ECBE) and re-accreditation in 2003. Further recognition of the importance of international comparisons with leading business schools was confirmed by international accreditations in 2008 and 2009 (ECBE) and by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programmes (ACBSP) for all EPF UM study programmes. In 2018, the faculty achieved its first AACSB accreditation – the most prestigious international accreditation in economics and business studies – and successfully renewed it in 2023. AACSB quality standards are met by only 6% of leading business schools worldwide, distinguished by excellence and innovation in teaching, research, and societal impact.

### **5.1.2 From the First Modest but Valuable International Experiences**

The very first beginnings, the initial international experiences and exchanges, were modest – perhaps all the more valuable because of that. As early as 1964, the school closely cooperated with the College of Economics in Berlin, from 1967 with the

College of Social and Economic Sciences in Linz, and from 1968 with the Faculty of Economics in Trieste, the University of Graz, the Vienna University of Economics and Business, and the College of Economics in Prague. Close international cooperation with these institutions led to the first international symposium, the First Alpe-Adria Symposium, in 1971. The symposium was the result of successful collaboration primarily between the College in Linz, the Faculty of Economics in Trieste, and the then College of Economics and Commerce (Hauptman & Oplotnik, 2019).

The already mentioned international study programme Business Management and Organization – MBA, established in 1990, was included in Slovenia's first TEMPUS project in 1991. Within the TEMPUS project, in the academic year 1991/92, the Commission of the European Communities approved three-year funding for the postgraduate master's programme International Postgraduate School of Management at the Faculty of Economics and Business – the first institution in Slovenia to receive such support – in cooperation with the Bayreuth Education Centre, the University of Trieste, and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The implementation of this international programme involved 21 universities and faculties from 8 countries in Europe and the USA (Hauptman & Oplotnik, 2019). Later, other TEMPUS programmes followed, significantly strengthening the international engagement of EPF UM students and teachers.

In 1997, EPF UM joined the Central European Programme CEEPUS with partners the Vienna University of Economics and Business and the University of Economic Sciences in Budapest. In 1998, EPF UM collaborated with Esbjerg Business Academy in Denmark on the international school IS FEBA. In the academic year 1998/1999, the international school hosted 19 Danish and 5 Slovenian students, and in the following year 15 Danish, 5 Chinese, and 8 Slovenian students (Hauptman & Oplotnik, 2019).

In 1997, EPF UM joined the Socrates-Erasmus programme, an EU action programme aimed at improving the quality of education, providing a European dimension to curricula, increasing opportunities for personal acquaintance with other European countries, strengthening awareness of a common European identity, and enhancing the ability to create and adapt to changes in economic and social life.

By 1999, EPF UM had signed student exchange agreements with 10 European universities and academies, offering 31 study places.

Today, EPF UM has agreements with more than 200 partner universities worldwide. The most important exchange projects since 2009 include: Erasmus+ (KA103), Erasmus+ (KA107), CEEPUS, JOINEUSEE, and BILATERALA.

**Table 1: Some aspects of internationalization at EPF UM in numbers**

	1959–2019	2014–2024
Number of students who went on exchange abroad	more than 1,300	more than 700
Number of international students who came on exchange to EPF	more than 2,400	more than 2,200
Number of visiting professors and staff from abroad hosted at EPF		more than 500
Number of EPF professors and staff who went on exchange abroad		more than 150

In the last decade, EPF UM has hosted more than 500 foreign visiting professors and professional staff from renowned European and non-European partner universities, as shown in Table 1. During the same period, more than 150 individuals (EPF UM teaching and professional staff) participated in exchanges abroad. In the last decade, EPF UM has hosted more than 2,200 foreign students and enabled more than 700 of its own students to study abroad.

### **5.1.3 Summer Schools**

The first international summer school Summer University Maribor was successfully held 30 years ago, in 1995 (Hauptman & Oplotnik, 2019). Together with partners Vienna University of Economics and Business and the University of Trieste, EPF UM organized summer schools from 1995 to 1998. 99 students from various European countries (Slovakia, Sweden, Croatia, Denmark, Slovenia) enhanced their knowledge through lectures by 14 professors from Slovenia, Sweden, Italy, and the USA. This was an excellent way to promote European cooperation in higher education.

Today, summer schools organized by EPF UM represent an important component of internationalization, focusing on current topics in economics, business, and sustainable development. They feature lecturers from practice and from prestigious business schools in Europe, Asia, and the USA, as well as students from numerous European business schools. Examples include Public Private Partnership: Working for Change and Cooperation (2011–2014), Big Data EU Business Implications (2016–2018), Sustainability in International Business (2022–present, annually).

#### 5.1.4 International Events and Conferences

International scientific conferences, shown in Table 2, have become the most important conferences in the field of management and economics in the region over the past decade.

**Table 2: Overview of international conferences at EPF UM in the last decade**

Year	Title
2014	7 <sup>th</sup> International Language Conference: The Importance of Learning Foreign Professional Languages for Intercultural Communication
2015	Conference with Round Table on the Competitive Position of Slovenian Winemakers and Wines in Third-Country Markets
2015	International Conference: Global Conference on Managing in Recovering Markets
2016	9 <sup>th</sup> International Language Conference: The Importance of Learning Foreign Professional Languages for Intercultural Communication
2017	1 <sup>st</sup> EPF International Conference: Teaching Methods for Economics and Business Studies
2018	2 <sup>nd</sup> EPF International Conference: Teaching Methods in Economics and Business Studies
2019	3 <sup>rd</sup> EPF International Conference: Teaching Methods in Economics and Business Studies
2020	4 <sup>th</sup> EPF International Conference: Contemporary Challenges in Economic and Business Research
2021	5 <sup>th</sup> EPF International Conference: Is It Time for a Complete Reset?
2022	6 <sup>th</sup> EPF International Conference: Challenges in Economy and Business in the Post-Covid Era
2023	7 <sup>th</sup> EPF International Conference: Strengthening Resilience through Sustainable Economy and Business – Towards Sustainable Development Goals
2024	8 <sup>th</sup> EPF International Conference: Challenges in a Turbulent Economic Environment and Sustainable Development of Organizations
2025	9 <sup>th</sup> EPF International Conference: Sustainable Management in the Era of ESG and Artificial Intelligence – Overcoming Challenges and Seizing Opportunities

## **5.2 The Perspective of the Faculty of Arts**

Internationalization has been present at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor (FF UM) since its establishment in 2006 and represents a fundamental pillar of the faculty's development, recognition, and reputation in the international academic space.

The strategic goals and work programme in the field of international activities at FF UM are designed to ensure an active role and openness of the faculty in cross-border, European, and global international cooperation in higher education. The aim is to promote internationalization, knowledge transfer, modern competences, and experiences in higher education pedagogical, professional, and research work in the fields of humanities and social sciences, in accordance with the Internationalization of Higher Education (Direktorat za visoko šolstvo, n.d.) and "ReNPVŠ30" (2022). These strategic goals contribute to the core mission and commitment of FF UM to operate educationally and scientifically in the spirit of intellectual breadth, humanistic values, and active citizenship. Through interdisciplinary collaboration in an international environment, the faculty significantly contributes to shaping Slovenian identity while strengthening values of human dignity, sustainable practices, and intercultural dialogue (Univerza v Mariboru, Filozofska fakulteta, n.d.). With its international visibility in research and education in the humanities and social sciences in Central Europe, FF UM makes a notable contribution to the comprehensive and sustainable development of the European community, socio-cultural integration, and socio-economic development of the region.

### **5.2.1 International Agreements and Cooperation Contracts, and Student and Staff Mobility**

Since its establishment, the Faculty of Arts (FF UM) has signed more than 250 bilateral international agreements with foreign higher education institutions within the Erasmus and CEEPUS mobility programmes. Of these, 50 agreements were concluded in the very first year of the faculty's operation (2006/07), when 28 students went abroad for study and 56 foreign students came to study at FF UM (Koletnik, 2009). This trend, particularly the popularity of FF UM among foreign students, has continued and grown throughout the subsequent 18 years of the faculty's existence. Table 3 presents some quantitative indicators of

internationalization at FF UM in the field of student and staff mobility over the past seven academic years.

The number of incoming students on exchange at FF UM has increased by more than 112% over the past seven years, from 70 to 159 students. There is also a noticeable trend of increasing visits by foreign higher education teachers to FF UM and of outgoing FF UM students participating in international study exchanges at foreign partner institutions. After the pandemic period, outgoing student mobility in 2023/24 reached 79 mobilities, surpassing the level before that period (2018/19). In the last seven years, FF UM has hosted more than 600 foreign students and 76 foreign teaching and professional staff, while enabling 346 students and 66 faculty employees to participate in exchanges abroad.

**Table 3: Some aspects of internationalization at FF UM in numbers (Erasmus+ and CEEPUS)**

Academic year	Incoming students on exchange at FF	Outgoing students on exchange abroad	Incoming staff on exchange at FF	Outgoing staff on exchange abroad
2017/18	70	84	4	10
2018/19	71	39	20	22
2019/20	66	34	7	6
2020/21	44	19	3	4
2021/22	102	45	12	3
2022/23	132	46	12	8
2023/24	159	79	18	13

### 5.2.2 Organization of Summer Schools and International Events

Since its establishment, the FF UM has actively participated in the CEEPUS programme – the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies – alongside the Erasmus programme. CEEPUS promotes student and teacher mobility and joint international cooperation projects among countries in Central and South-eastern Europe. FF UM collaborates within the CEEPUS programme with higher education institutions from 16 countries: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Hungary, North Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Serbia. Currently, nine CEEPUS networks operate at FF UM. The first active CEEPUS network was established in 2007 in the field of geography under the title GEOREGNET

(Koletnik, 2009). FF UM coordinated this network, which included 12 partner institutions: University of Graz, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, University of Ljubljana, University of Novi Sad, University of Olomouc, University of Pécs, University of Prague, University of Prešov, University of Primorska, University of Tuzla, University of Zadar, and University of Zagreb. Other CEEPUS networks later joined GEOREGNET, such as: TRANS – TRANSkulturelle Kommunikation und TRANSlation, E-BOLOGNA – Network for Translation Studies and Transcultural Communication Programmes in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in the field of translation studies, Inter-American Studies in the field of English and American studies, PACE – Pedagogy and Andragogy in South-East Europe in the field of pedagogy and andragogy, Sociology for Societies – Understanding socio-cultural changes in contemporary societies – Soc4Soc in the field of sociology, Philosophy and Interdisciplinarity in the field of philosophy, Slavic Philology and Its Cultural Contexts, and most recently Macedonian Studies in Central European Slavic and Balkan Context in the field of Slavic languages and literature. Today, FF UM is the main coordinator of the CEEPUS network TRANS. In the past, it also coordinated other networks, such as GEOREGNET and Inter-American Studies.

CEEPUS networks represent an important component of internationalization, as they provide not only individual student and professor mobility but also the content, organizational, and financial basis for organizing international summer schools. The first international summer school, which later became a tradition at FF UM, was organized even before the faculty's formal establishment, in cooperation with the Central European Association for Canadian Studies (CEACS). It focused on English language and literature and the culture of English-speaking nations. In 2008, around 30 students attended the fourth edition of this summer school (Koletnik, 2009). Among the longest-running summer schools is the one within the CEEPUS network TRANS, which in 2024 was organized for the eleventh time under the title: International Translation Summer Academy and Symposium TRANS 2024 – Translation and Transcreation in the Digital Environment. This seven-day summer school, as a project of international cooperation and networking in South-eastern Europe, is intended for foreign and domestic students and professors in the fields of translation studies, linguistics, and intercultural communication. A special contribution of the International Translation Academy to FF UM's internationalization is its joint organization with the Directorate-General for

Translation of the European Parliament and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb (Univerza v Mariboru, Filozofska fakulteta, 2024a). Another active summer school at the faculty is the Slovenian Language Summer School as a Second and Foreign Language – Slovenščina na prvi pogled (Slovenian at First Sight), organized since 2022 by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures within the CEEPUS network Slavic Philology and Its Cultural Contexts. This two-week summer school is intended for international students, Slovenian and Slavic language teachers, and translators who study or work in the field of Slovenian language, literature, and culture in Central and South-eastern Europe (Univerza v Mariboru, Filozofska fakulteta, 2024b). Both summer schools are designed as intensive educational programmes consisting of lectures, workshops, language exercises, conversations, round tables, participation in cultural events, and professional excursions, and are credited with 3 ECTS. In the academic year 2024/2025, the summer school within the CEEPUS network GEOREGNET will be reintroduced. Its first international summer school was organized at the end of summer 2008 with 22 students participating (Koletnik, 2009).

In addition to summer schools, FF UM has organized major and current international events since its establishment, such as: Slavic Scientific Reflections at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, International Scientific Symposium of the Department of History, International Conferences of the Department of English and American Studies in cooperation with international associations (e.g., Central European Association for Canadian Studies), International Student Philosophical Symposium, and others. Important aspects of FF UM's internationalization also include participation in joint study programmes, such as: Master in European Studies, Euromediterranean Master in Culture as well as Tourism and Intercultural German Studies.

### **5.3 Perspective of the Faculty of Education**

In the 1970s and 1980s, Slovenia, as part of Yugoslavia, participated in the Non-Aligned Movement, which enabled intensive cooperation with institutions from these countries and also international collaboration of the Pedagogical Academy and later the Faculty of Education of the University of Maribor (PEF UM) (since 1986) (Hauptman Komotar, 2019). A major step toward more active integration into the international environment for PEF UM was the full membership of the Republic of

Slovenia in the European Union and participation in the Erasmus programme. The division of the large PEF UM in 2006 into three new members of the University of Maribor marked a step toward the independent development of the faculty also in the international sphere (Univerza v Mariboru, Pedagoška fakulteta, 2011).

In 2012, the faculty adopted the International Cooperation Programme of PEF UM, which emphasized staff and student mobility, participation in international research and artistic work, inclusion of visiting lecturers in the pedagogical process, involvement in international projects, internationalization of the curriculum through cooperation with foreign higher education institutions, and international activities of professional service staff.

In 2022, PEF UM adopted the Strategic Development Plan of the Faculty of Education UM 2022–2030 (Univerza v Mariboru, Pedagoška fakulteta, 2022), which includes additional strategic directions and goals in many areas, including internationalization. The key building blocks for the future are: strengthening the international visibility of PEF UM, developing various forms of education in foreign languages, actively co-shaping the European and global higher education area, promoting international mobility of staff and students, internationalization at the national level, and harmonizing university services for domestic and foreign students and employees in accordance with European principles and standards.

### **5.3.1 Concrete Experiences and the Importance of Signed Agreements with International Partners**

One of the key pillars of international activities and the internationalization of the PEF UM has, from the very beginning, been inter-institutional agreements concluded with foreign higher education institutions within the frameworks of Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, CEEPUS, and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. These agreements have enabled the exchange of experiences, acquisition of new knowledge, and the establishment of new contacts for teaching and studying abroad, as well as research and participation in international projects.

In addition, bilateral agreements were signed with foreign institutions, primarily from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. These agreements allowed cooperation outside the Erasmus programme at a time when these countries were not yet able to participate in the programme.

### **5.3.2 Key Measures and Activities Contributing to Internationalization**

The internationalization of PEF UM has been significantly driven by student and staff mobility, participation in international networks and projects, and internationally recognized achievements of our researchers, artists, and athletes.

Over the past 10 years, PEF UM has annually maintained between 120 and 150 Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements in the fields of education, sports, music, and arts with around 100 foreign institutions. Foreign students studying at PEF UM can choose from 100 to 120 course units annually, of which about half are usually delivered for them. Between 6 and 10 course units are jointly delivered for domestic and foreign students (internal PEF UM data on mobility and project involvement in the period 2013–2025, January 2025).

Each year, the faculty typically participates in 18 to 25 international projects, most often co-financed by the Erasmus programme, the European Regional Development Fund, the Recovery and Resilience Plan, and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. Between 70 and 90 teaching staff, researchers, and professional associates are involved annually in these international projects. Students have also been included for many years; in 2024, 16 students participated in international projects, and each year student projects are implemented where students and mentors collaborate with partners from industry and other sectors. Participation in these international projects strengthens the faculty's research and educational capacity, promotes international cooperation, and contributes to the development of innovative pedagogical approaches (internal PEF UM data on mobility and project involvement in the period 2013–2025, January 2025).

Since 2000, PEF UM has recorded 274 outgoing student mobilities for study and practical training abroad, 634 incoming student mobilities, 503 outgoing staff mobilities for teaching and training, and 243 incoming staff mobilities for teaching and training. Recently, PEF UM students increasingly participate in Collaborative International Programmes (CIP), which combine various forms of learning and cooperation with international partners, enhancing their intercultural understanding, 21st-century skills, and preparing them for successful engagement in a globalized world.

PEF UM frequently includes foreign lecturers in its study process, enriching educational content with their knowledge and experience. Lecturers from Spain, New Zealand, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, and the USA have participated in first- and second-cycle programmes. At the doctoral level, a Slovenian professor employed at Harvard University, USA, has contributed.

PEF UM lecturers also engage in pedagogical and research processes at foreign higher education institutions. In recent years, cooperation has taken place with universities in Finland, Austria, Spain, Slovakia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, USA, Great Britain, and Norway. PEF UM collaborates in delivering the second-cycle study programme Inclusion in Education with the University of Zagreb (Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences) and the University of Zadar (Department of Teacher and Preschool Education). For the third-cycle programme Educational Sciences, it also cooperates with the University of Zagreb (Faculty of Teacher Education). In the future, the faculty plans long-term cooperation with the University of Novi Sad in implementing a joint second-cycle master's programme in Speech Therapy and Surdopedagogy. The faculty successfully collaborates with the University of Zadar in organizing annual international conferences and publishing monographs and sees new opportunities emerging with Thomas More University (Belgium), North University in Boston, USA, and University of Manchester, Great Britain (internal PEF UM data on mobility and project involvement in the period 2013–2025, January 2025).

PEF UM also participates in international networks. It is particularly active in the KASTALIA network, which connects 16 teacher education institutions covering a wide range of subject areas and all levels of education – from preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education to research.

Participation in the ATHENA European University Alliance provides the faculty access to extensive knowledge resources, new research opportunities, and additional possibilities for collaboration in summer schools, CIP, or joint study programmes.

Higher education teachers and associates habilitated under artistic criteria and employed at PEF UM participate in numerous international events. Annually, they organize 30 to 60 different artistic events, such as art exhibitions, performances, and concerts by higher education teachers and students at the international level. Those

working in artistic fields are active members of international associations and collaborate with foreign artists and artistic organizations.

PEF UM students and graduates achieve outstanding sports results internationally, both as competitors and coaches in various disciplines. Top results have been achieved particularly in cycling, alpine skiing, ski jumping, biathlon, judo, swimming, volleyball, athletics, and artistic gymnastics, significantly contributing to the international visibility of the University of Maribor.

Activities related to organizing summer schools, international events, and collaborations are also important. Organizing international summer schools enables networking among students from different parts of the world. In the past four years, PEF UM has successfully implemented a joint course unit with international student participation in cooperation with Thomas More University (Belgium) as part of its internationalization strategy. The course unit Teach Future Proof has involved more than 250 students from both institutions over the past four years, including over 90 PEF UM students. These programmes allow students to gain valuable international experience and develop competences in a global context. In 2025, the faculty will implement this programme for the first time as an accredited international spring school (internal PEF UM data on mobility and project involvement in the period 2013–2025, January 2025).

### **5.3.3 Collaboration in Organizing Scientific and Professional Events with International Participation**

PEF UM organizes or co-organizes international scientific and professional events every year. The most notable events in the past four years include:

- In 2024, the faculty organized:
  - International Conference Rethinking Childhood III – Teaching for an Inclusive, Technologically Competent, and Sustainability-Oriented Society;
  - International Multiplier Event of the project Culture Nature Literacy;
- In 2023, PEF UM co-organized with the University of Zadar the conference Rethinking Childhood II: Child and Space;
- In 2022, the faculty co-organized the following international events:

- May 2022: Meeting of the Kastalia Network titled Multilingualism and Internationalization at Home, attended by 14 participants from Greece, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Romania;
- November 2022: International Week on the theme Future of Internationalization, attended by 8 participants from Serbia, Slovakia, and Belgium;
- May 2022: Co-organization of the conference A Look into the Classroom – From Tradition to Modernity (Croatian Association of Primary Schools);
- May 2022: Co-organization of the conference Didactic Challenges IV: Futures Studies in Education (Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek);
- September 2022: Co-organization of the 18th International Scientific Meeting Distance Education During the Pandemic – Challenges and Opportunities (University of Primorska Faculty of Education in cooperation with the University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Education in Užice and Jagodina, Serbia);
- In 2021, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of PEF UM, the faculty organized the International Scientific Conference Perspectives on the Development of Teacher Education in Changing Social Circumstances.

## **5.4 Perspective of the Faculty of Law**

With clear goals of strengthening international visibility, connecting with prestigious foreign universities and institutions, and numerous partnerships in international projects and activities, the Faculty of Law of the University of Maribor (PF UM) continuously enhances its educational process and enriches the experience of the entire academic community. The beginnings of these efforts date back 65 years, when law studies were first introduced in Maribor. Key achievements are presented below by category to illustrate the diversity of internationalization.

### **5.4.1 Erasmus+ and International Exchanges**

The Erasmus programme began in 2001. PF UM was among the first faculties to actively implement the Erasmus programme. Many ideas on how to balance exchanges and achieve equilibrium between outgoing and incoming mobilities contributed broadly to the programme's success. Agreements were concluded with

the most prestigious partners in the EU, and a stable system of teacher and staff exchanges was established. Vesna Rijavec was selected as the Erasmus Ambassador for Slovenia on the programme's 25th anniversary. Another significant achievement is PF UM's membership in the Erasmus Network of the University of Rotterdam, which includes the best universities from each EU country and from 19 countries outside the EU. Exchanges with universities in this network are possible directly. In addition to the network, PF UM has 67 bilateral agreements with universities from the European Union and worldwide (Univerza v Mariboru, Pravna fakulteta, n.d.-a). The number of participants in exchanges has long surpassed the first thousand.

#### 5.4.2 Bilateral Cooperation

PF UM has developed bilateral cooperation with partners outside the Erasmus network in the following countries:

- USA: Wayne State University (notably, this cooperation is particularly intensive; in 2022, the institutions signed a comprehensive agreement to collaborate on joint study programmes at master's and doctoral levels, exchange teaching staff and researchers, and jointly publish articles and edit journals), Hamline University;
- Germany: University of Hannover, University of Göttingen;
- United Kingdom: Kingston University (Know How Fund Programme), Cardiff University;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: University of Mostar, University of Sarajevo;
- Serbia: University of Belgrade, University of Novi Sad;
- Montenegro: University of Podgorica;
- Uzbekistan: Tashkent State University;
- Armenia: Yerevan State University;
- Albania: Albanian Mediterranean University;
- Russia: Lomonosov Moscow State University, Ural State University (Yekaterinburg), South-Ural State University (Chelyabinsk);
- Japan: Waseda University, Tokyo (Univerza v Mariboru, Pravna fakulteta, n.d.-a).

### **5.4.3 Visiting Professors at the Faculty of Law and Cooperation of Faculty Members at Foreign Universities**

PF UM routinely includes foreign experts in the pedagogical process, consultations, and other activities. Numerous guests cannot be listed exhaustively. Faculty members from PF UM have also taught and conducted research at prestigious foreign universities, including: Waseda University (Tokyo), Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto), Universities of Göttingen, Hamburg, Münster, and Frankfurt (Oder), Philipps University of Marburg, Fordham University (New York), Masaryk University, Portucalense University, University of Pavia, Universities of Vienna and Graz, Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Birmingham, University of Bilbao, University of Aruba, University of Lisbon, Nelson Mandela University, Ozyegin University, Max Planck Institute (Hamburg and Luxembourg), University of Leuven, and University of Zagreb (internal PF UM data on academic staff mobility in the period 2008–2024, January 2025).

PF UM professors are recognized internationally, being invited to doctoral dissertation committees and mentoring students at foreign universities. For example, at KU Leuven, PF UM professors have delivered lectures and served on doctoral defence committees. They participate in peer reviews during evaluations of foreign institutions (e.g., Faculties of Law in Vienna and Graz) and in the development of new study programmes (Portugal, Croatia, Montenegro). They are invited to professor appointment committees (Berufungskommission) in Germany and Austria. Within the EU, they have been successful in the Jean Monnet programme and in Marie Curie Sklodowska postdoctoral programmes (Univerza v Mariboru, Pravna fakulteta, n.d.-a).

For over a decade, cooperation between the Universities of Graz and Maribor has included joint seminars, where activities for students in Civil Procedural Law and International Commercial Law were conducted with the cooperation of professors at both universities partly in Maribor and partly in Graz. The international recognition of PF UM's achievements is also reflected in the awarding of honorary doctorates to Vesna Rijavec by the University of Graz and the University of Uppsala (Univerza v Mariboru, 2022).

#### **5.4.4 Cooperation with Foreign Partners in Research Projects (as Coordinators)**

PF UM has collaborated with foreign partners in the following research projects:

- Diversity of Enforcement Titles in Cross-Border Debt Collection in EU (EU-EN4s) – 14 EU countries and Albania;
- Train to Enforce – Train 2 EN4CE – 8 EU countries;
- European Investigation Order – Legal Analysis and Practical Dilemmas of International Cooperation (EIO-LAPD) – 6 EU countries; Digital Communication and Safeguarding the Parties' Rights: Challenges for European Civil Procedure – 7 EU countries;
- Simplified Debt Collection in the EU – 13 EU countries;
- Dimensions of Evidence in European Civil Procedure – 8 EU countries;
- Legal Remedies Related to the Enforcement of Foreign Judgements under Brussels Ia (Recast) – 9 EU countries;
- European Enforcement Order – 3 EU countries;
- Reform of Evidence Law in the Digital Age – 9 EU countries;
- UNODC Project on Corruption – 6 EU countries;
- WOODIE – Whistleblowing Open Data Impact, An Implementation and Impact Assessment – 8 EU countries;
- The Culture of Lawfulness: International Workshop on Utilizing the E4J Training Modules in Central European Higher Education – 4 EU countries;
- BRIDGE – Promoting Mutual Understanding and Cooperation between the EU and Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine – 8 countries;
- TEMPUS JEP (Joint European Project) POGESTEI – Postgraduate Study Programme on European Integration at Universities in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Niš – 5 countries;
- TEMPUS JEP Project: Master's Programme on European Integration and EU Neighbourhood Policy – MEINEPO – 5 countries;
- TEMPUS JPCR Project EUNEG – Law of EU Neighbourhood Policy and the Principle of Good Governance – 5 countries (Pravna fakulteta Univerze v Mariboru, Inštitut za civilno, primerjalno in mednarodno zasebno pravo, n.d.; Univerza v Mariboru, Pravna fakulteta, n.d.-c).

#### **5.4.5 Participation of Faculty Members in Editorial Boards of Internationally Recognized Publications and Publishing in the International Arena**

Higher education teachers at PF UM serve on editorial boards of internationally recognized publications and publish in the international arena, for example in: *Beiträge zur Rechtsgeschichte Österreichs*, *Common market law review*, *Corruptio*, *Horizonti*. *Serijska A. Opštinstveni i humanistički nauki*, *The International Journal of Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability*, *International Journal of Law in Changing World*, *Justicia: revistă ndërkombëtare – shkenkore juridike*, *Law, identity and values*, *Lexonomica*, *Medicine, law & society*, *Yearbook of International & European Criminal and Procedural Law*, *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Splitu*, *Pancasila and Law Review*, as reflected in *Cobiss (Univerza v Mariboru, Pravna fakultet, n.d.-a)*.

#### **5.4.6 International Conferences and Summer Schools, Student Competitions**

By organizing summer schools and conferences, PF UM demonstrates its commitment to connecting theory and practice. It also participates in the most relevant summer schools organized by others, such as the Summer School of Civil Law at Université Paris II Panthéon-Assas, the Alpbach Summer School on European Integration, and the Public and Private Justice seminars at IUC Dubrovnik.

Students successfully take part in prestigious international competitions, such as: *Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot*, *Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition*, *European Law Moot Court*, *All European International Humanitarian and Refugee Law Moot Court Competition*, (*Univerza v Mariboru, Pravna fakulteta, n.d.-b*).

### **5.5 Perspective of the Faculty of Organizational Sciences**

The Faculty of Organizational Sciences of the University of Maribor (FOV UM) operates across a broad field of organizational sciences, encompassing three main pillars, namely information systems, human resources and educational systems, and

business systems engineering; it places internationalization at the core of its development and recognition within the global academic environment. The faculty's activities are directed towards active engagement and visibility in the international arena, striving to expand international cooperation, increase the number of partnerships, and promote staff and student exchanges. These processes contribute to improving the quality of education and research.

Within the Development Strategy of the Faculty of Organizational Sciences of the University of Maribor 2022–2027 (Fakulteta za organizacijske vede, n.d.), five strategic objectives in the field of internationalization are clearly defined, committing the faculty to continuous development in international cooperation, the exchange of best practices and dissemination of knowledge across the broad domain of organizational sciences, and the development of programmes in line with international guidelines and trends, ensuring international recognition within the academic community. FOV UM relies on the values of social responsibility, sustainable development, and excellence in delivering educational, scientific-research, and professional activities, in accordance with international standards and a commitment to excellence.

Today, FOV UM has around 25 bilateral agreements, most within the Erasmus+ and CEEPUS programmes. Since the academic year 2004/05, students have been integrated into the European Education Area through the Erasmus-Socrates programme, and in 2007 FOV UM joined the Erasmus programme. Within the Research Centre, faculty researchers are involved in numerous international projects.

Research projects play a key role in promoting internationalization and expanding academic influence at the international level. They enable the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices, breaking down barriers between different cultural and academic environments, while serving as an important source for developing innovative teaching methods and research approaches. Currently, 17 international research projects funded by the European Union are underway.

### **5.5.1 Beginnings of the Faculty and International Engagement**

The origins of the faculty date back to 1959, when the Junior Personnel and Social College was established. In 1965, it was renamed the Junior College of Work Organization and was then a leading educational institution in the field of personnel

and organization, also in other countries of the former Yugoslavia. Following the example of this junior college, similar institutions emerged in Zagreb and Belgrade, the latter later evolving into the Faculty of Organizational Sciences in Belgrade. The Junior College of Work Organization operated with study departments in several organisations both domestically and in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its wider recognition led to the establishment of the first foundations for conference activities in 1967, when it organized the Yugoslav symposium on responsibility in work organizations. In 1971, the then-named Junior College of Work Organization joined the Association of Higher Education Institutions Maribor and later, in 1975, became one of the founding members of the University of Maribor (Fakulteta za organizacijske vede, 2009).

### **5.5.2 International Accreditations**

The international recognition of second-cycle study programmes is confirmed by the ECBE – European Council for Business Education accreditation obtained in 2009, whose primary mission is to promote and maintain the highest standards of excellence in management education within the European area. The ECBE accreditation demonstrates FOV's commitment to continuous improvement and modernisation of its pedagogical and research work.

### **5.5.3 International Conferences**

Conference activities at FOV UM have a long-standing tradition. Conferences bring together experts from domestic and international environments, who share their research achievements with the wider public, while also involving students at all levels of study in the international research space.

The International Bled eConference, which began in 1988, started as the first consultation on computer data exchange (Fakulteta za organizacijske vede, 2009). The conference focuses on key topics such as digital transformation, artificial intelligence and machine learning, data analytics and business intelligence, blockchain and digital currencies, e-government and digital society, cybersecurity, and many others. The conference, with an international programme committee, attracts around 250 participants from more than 25 countries each year, and since 2008, papers have been included in the ISI Conference Proceedings Citation Index,

indicating the high quality and recognition of contributions at the conference. Conference themes for the past 10 years are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Overview of international conferences at FOV UM since 2015**

Conference	Year	Conference Theme
Bled eConference (BeC)	2025	38 <sup>th</sup> BeC Empowerment for Transformation: Shaping the Digital Future for All
	2024	37 <sup>th</sup> BeC Resilience through Digital Innovation: Enabling the Twin Transition
	2023	36 <sup>th</sup> BeC Digital Economy and Society: The Role of Digital Innovation in Times of Instability
	2022	35 <sup>th</sup> BeC Digital Restructuring and Human (Re)Action
	2021	34 <sup>th</sup> BeC Digital Support from Crisis to Progressive Change
	2020	33 <sup>rd</sup> BeC Digital Restructuring and Human (Re)Action
	2019	32 <sup>nd</sup> BeC Bringing Technology Closer to People for Sustainable Societal Development
	2018	31 <sup>st</sup> BeC Digital Transformation: Managing Challenges
	2017	30 <sup>th</sup> BeC Digital Transformation – From Connecting Things to Transforming Our Lives
	2016	29 <sup>th</sup> BeC Digital Economy
	2015	28 <sup>th</sup> BeC E-Services for Well-being
International Conference on Organizational Science Development (ICOSD)	2024	43 <sup>rd</sup> ICOSD Green and Digital Transition – Challenge or Opportunity
	2023	42 <sup>nd</sup> ICOSD Interdisciplinarity Matters
	2022	41 <sup>st</sup> ICOSD Societal Challenges as Opportunities for Organizations
	2021	40 <sup>th</sup> ICOSD Values, Competences and Changes in Organizations
	2020	39 <sup>th</sup> ICOSD Organizations at the Crossroads of Innovation and Digital Transformation
	2019	38 <sup>th</sup> ICOSD Organizational Ecosystem in the Age of Digitalization
	2018	37 <sup>th</sup> ICOSD Organization and Uncertainty in the Digital Era
	2017	36 <sup>th</sup> ICOSD Responsible Organization
	2016	35 <sup>th</sup> ICOSD Sustainable Organization
2015	34 <sup>th</sup> ICOSD Internationalization and Cooperation	

The International Conference on Organizational Science Development began in 1981 as an annual consultation of work organizers and received its current name in 2003 (Fakulteta za organizacijske vede, 2009). Current topics include organization and management, informatics, business systems engineering, human resource management, social responsibility, e-learning, business models, business process management, and quality management. Highlights of conferences since 2015 are shown in Table 4. It is worth noting that the International Conference on Organizational Science Development is the oldest conference at UM.

The faculty also participates as a co-organiser in various international conferences, such as SOR (International Symposium on Operations Research in Slovenia) and Information Society.

#### **5.5.4 Summer Schools and Other Forms of Cooperation (Mobility Weeks, Study Visits)**

The first international summer school at FOV UM was organised in 2009 as part of the International eConference, with a programme focused on various aspects of using modern information and communication technologies for innovative business. Students from Croatia and North Macedonia attended lectures delivered by domestic lecturers and professors from the Netherlands and China. Since 2021, the faculty has been organising a summer school entitled Organization, Management and Society, where students acquire basic knowledge in areas such as human resource competences, fundamentals of entrepreneurship and business idea development, integration of engineering into the green and digital transition, application of artificial intelligence, international marketing, and this year's central theme – gamification. With the knowledge gained, students tackle a real-world challenge in the form of a case study and present their solutions at the end. FOV UM students also actively participate in summer schools abroad, organized mainly as Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs), which combine short-term physical mobility with a virtual component, thus providing students with a brief parallel international experience alongside their studies at the home faculty.

During mobility weeks, networking with peers in the international environment is key to spreading ideas and transferring knowledge. Through workshops and lectures at these events, the international activities of the University of Maribor, the faculty's study programmes, and research activities are promoted. Exchanging ideas and experiences with colleagues from different countries contributes to knowledge transfer and the improvement of pedagogical and research approaches, while new acquaintances also present opportunities for concluding new agreements and fostering closer cooperation in the future.

For several years, the faculty has successfully organized study visits for both students and staff to various work environments in the European neighbourhood, where students can learn about work organization and leadership in large international corporations and partner institutions. Study visits are an excellent opportunity to broaden knowledge and discover diverse best practices that both students and employees can implement in their respective fields of activity.

### **5.5.5 Organizacija Journal**

An important channel of internationalization is the journal *Organizacija*, the origins of which date back to 1963, when a publication entitled *Kadrovska politika – strokovni in informativni časopis za vprašanja kadrovske politike* (Eng. *Personnel Policy – Professional and Informative Journal for Personnel Policy Issues*) was first issued. In 1994, the journal was renamed *Organizacija* with the subtitle *Revija za management, informatiko in kadre* (Eng. *Journal for Management, Informatics and Personnel*). Since 2008, it has published original scientific articles in English (professional articles could still be published in Slovenian), and since 2013, all publications have been exclusively in English, which increases their reach and dissemination of innovative ideas in the international arena. The journal, with an international editorial board, is included in numerous bibliographic databases and indexes, among others in Scopus and Web of Science – Emerging Sources Citation Index, and is also published on the website of the Sciendo publishing house (part of De Gruyter) (Fakulteta za organizacijske vede, 2009).

## **5.6 Perspective of the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security**

### **5.6.1 Foundations of International Cooperation**

International cooperation of the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security of the University of Maribor (FVV UM) began more than four decades ago, when the faculty was still the Junior College of Internal Affairs and started establishing connections beyond the borders of Slovenia, which at that time was part of Yugoslavia. The first steps on what is now the international stage included partnerships with related schools in Zagreb, Belgrade and Skopje. A real breakthrough occurred in the late 1980s, when the Junior College began establishing relations with police academies in Wiesbaden and Münster in Germany, as well as with educational institutions in Italy and Austria (Meško, 2023; Sotlar et al., 2023). These early collaborations laid the foundations for the faculty's current international engagement.

In the 1990s, the international activities of the Junior College of Internal Affairs and later the College of Internal Affairs became more ambitious. The Junior College of Internal Affairs joined the Central European Police Academy (MEPA), participated

in the design and implementation of its programme, and was involved in the management of the academy. Through the academy, it established contacts with other high-level police schools from Poland, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic. A very important milestone in international cooperation was the organization of the first biennial conference Policing in Central and Eastern Europe in 1996, which became and has remained an important meeting point for scientists and practitioners in the field of criminal justice from East and West, particularly Central Europe and the Western Balkans (Meško, 2023).

### **5.6.2 Global Recognition and Contemporary International Initiatives**

The transformation into a faculty and integration into the University of Maribor at the beginning of the 21st century brought a significant expansion of the faculty's international cooperation. This was also supported by international research projects involving partnerships with prestigious institutions such as the University of Cambridge and Michigan State University. One of the first and most notable initiatives was the CRIMPREV project, which ran from 2006 to 2009. Research projects have always been at the heart of the faculty's international cooperation. In the Daphne project, which ran from 2004 to 2006, a handbook for victims of stalking was created, demonstrating the faculty's commitment to addressing current social issues. This was followed by EEMUS (European Master's Programme in Security in Local Communities), URBIS (establishing a European doctoral programme in local security management), ARIEL (focused on the infiltration of organised crime into legitimate economic activities), Water Crimes (project on limited water resources and forms of crime related to water), IMPRODOVA (aimed at improving responses to domestic violence), and SHINE (focused on preventing and managing sexual harassment in nightlife) (Meško, 2023; Sotlar et al., 2023). These and other projects highlighted the faculty's ability to address a wide range of security issues through international cooperation. Such collaborations not only enhanced the faculty's research capacity but also positioned it prominently on the global academic stage.

After joining the University of Maribor, an intensive process of student and staff mobility began under the Erasmus programme. Within just a few years, mobility reached such proportions that it became the cornerstone of the faculty's international strategy, which in 2012 adopted its first international cooperation

programme. Through programmes such as Erasmus+ and Swiss Mobility, the faculty enabled exchanges of students and staff with partners across Europe. The exchanges were not only aimed at knowledge transfer; they also included practical visits to Slovenian institutions, giving foreign students and professors a comprehensive understanding of the local context. Students have had numerous study visits to institutions, companies and civil initiatives in the field of security. Between 2006 and 2009, the faculty participated in a student exchange project for criminology students from Australian and European universities. During this period, fifteen FVV UM students studied at Australian universities, while fifteen Australian students studied in Slovenia. Between 2006 and 2023, under the Erasmus programme, 193 students went on exchange, and 265 foreign students came to the faculty. Today, partner institutions from 40 countries cover almost the entire European area. Foreign students coming for Erasmus exchange have access to courses in English and are also introduced to the practical work of various institutions in Slovenia, such as the police, correctional facilities, non-governmental organisations and local communities (Sotlar et al., 2023).

International strategic partnerships have played a key role in the development of the faculty. In the past two decades, there has been intensive cooperation with several prominent international organizations, such as the European Group for the Study of Norms (GERN), European Society of Criminology (ESC), American Society of Criminology (ASC), Association of Doctoral Programmes in Criminology and Criminal Justice (ADPCCJ), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI), Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), Max Planck Balkan Criminology Network (MPBCN), European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) and European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) (Meško, 2023; Sotlar et al., 2023).

Conferences have always been part of the faculty's international strategy, as has networking. In addition to the already mentioned conference from 1996 (Criminal Justice and Security in Central and Eastern Europe), it is worth noting the European Criminology Conference in 2009, organised by the faculty together with the University of Ljubljana and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, as well as the high-profile international criminalistics conference in 2011. In 2017, FVV UM

also began organizing international conferences in the field of information security. The first was called the Central European Cybersecurity Conference, and since 2019, it has been renamed the European Interdisciplinary Cybersecurity Conference to emphasise interdisciplinarity and broaden its reach. The conference brings together researchers and practitioners in the field of cybersecurity in Europe and promotes dialogue between computer scientists and researchers from other fields such as behavioural sciences, sociology, criminology, investigation and law (Meško, 2023; Sotlar et al., 2023).

In 2008, the faculty organised an international undergraduate summer school in Piran, and in 2018 a doctoral summer school in Ljubljana. The faculty also participated in the implementation of GERN doctoral schools at universities in Dortmund (2016) and Porto (2019) (Meško, 2023). The development of FVV UM thus reflects a transformation and growth driven by a commitment to international cooperation. From early partnerships within the former Yugoslavia to its current status of global recognition in the field of security studies, the faculty has consistently strived to broaden its horizons and integrate into the international academic community.

Members of the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security serve on numerous editorial boards of international journals, among which the most notable are: *European Journal of Criminology*, *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, *Crime and Deviance*, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *International Criminology*, *Journal of Applied Security Research*, *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, *Policing – An International Journal*. One of the faculty members served as President of the European Society of Criminology (2018) and is also a recipient of awards for scientific excellence and the development of criminology and criminal justice studies from the American Society of Criminology (ASC, 2022) and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS, 2024) at the global level. Through active partnerships, research projects, educational exchanges and conferences, the faculty has built a vibrant network of global collaborations that continue to shape its future.

## 6 Challenges and the Future of Internationalization

The University of Maribor has a rich history and a number of key achievements in the field of internationalization, reflecting its successful approach to integration into the global academic world. Since the 1990s, the University of Maribor has pursued strategic internationalization that has gone beyond mere mobility of students and professors, transforming into a comprehensive integration of international dimensions into educational and research activities.

Based on the Council Resolution on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training towards the European Education Area and Beyond 2021–2030, adopted in 2021, the future of internationalization promises intensive networking among higher education institutions. This framework sets strategic priorities for improving the quality, inclusiveness, and digital and green dimensions of education systems in the European Union. Among the key objectives are strengthening European tertiary education, creating transnational alliances, pooling resources, mobility and cooperation, and promoting research and innovation (“Resolucija Sveta o strateškem okviru za evropsko sodelovanje v izobraževanju in usposabljanju pri uresničevanju evropskega izobraževalnega prostora in širše 2021–2030”, 2021).

The recommendations of the Council of the European Union from 2022 call for the development of joint study programmes, a European degree, innovative transnational activities, and deeper cooperation in higher education. The Council of the European Union advocates strengthening the European dimension of higher education, research and innovation, and synergies between them, supporting alliances of higher education institutions such as “European Universities”, and expanding the European Student Card initiative (“Priporočilo Sveta z dne 5. aprila 2022 o vzpostavljanju povezav za učinkovito evropsko sodelovanje na področju visokošolskega izobraževanja”, 2022).

In the field of science, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union in 2021 emphasised strengthening an open research and innovation environment based on common principles and values. EU Member States are committed to applying shared values for research and innovation: excellence, open science, ethics, freedom of research, gender equality, free flow of knowledge, value

creation and societal impact (“Priporočilo Sveta (EU) 2021/2122 z dne 26. novembra 2021 o Paktu za raziskave in inovacije v Evropi”, 2021).

Slovenia’s National Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education until 2030 defines three priority areas: active involvement of Slovenian higher education in the EU, internationalization at home by integrating international dimensions into the curriculum, and international student mobility that promotes shorter forms of exchange (Direktorat za visoko šolstvo, n.d.). The University of Maribor is preparing for future challenges, which will include rapid adaptation and digitalisation to improve the quality of education, strengthen social responsibility, and ensure the implementation of the principles of global cooperation.

Despite clear European and national guidelines for the future development of internationalization, which see it not merely as a goal but primarily as a means or a set of tools through which higher education institutions improve the quality of education and research and strengthen their socially responsible role, ensuring the implementation of the principles of global cooperation, inclusion and socially responsible sharing of knowledge and innovation may in the future be under pressure from changing political and economic conditions, which will potentially require adjustments by the University of Maribor. Rapid responsiveness and adaptability will be a challenge likely closely linked to the degree of digitalisation and the range of developed innovative forms of mobility, which in themselves will not depend on such changing factors.

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