

THE CREATION OF FOUNDATIONS, BEGINNINGS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR

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The development of higher education in Maribor was closely tied to educational reforms in Slovenia and Yugoslavia, as well as to the economic and social needs of northeastern Slovenia after the Second World War. Between 1959 and 1961, the first higher education institutions were established in Maribor, including schools of commerce, engineering, agronomy, law, dentistry, and the Pedagogical Academy. In 1961, the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor was also founded, representing a significant step toward the institutional integration of the higher education landscape. In the early 1970s, with support from both local and republic authorities, intensive preparations for the establishment of a university began. The self-management agreement to merge into the University of Maribor was signed on June 12, 1975, and confirmed by the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia on July 2, 1975. This officially marked the founding of the University of Maribor, with Vladimir Bračič serving as its first rector.

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1 The Establishment of the First Higher Education Institutions in Maribor

In the early 1950s, the communist authorities began implementing a comprehensive education reform, which also encompassed the field of higher education. At that time, the University of Ljubljana was the only university operating in Slovenia. During the reform of higher education, it faced numerous challenges, including the restructuring of study programmes, the introduction of new statutes, and disagreement of university professors. A central issue of the reform was the relationship between future higher education institutions and faculties, as this required a tiered study system and an inversion of the curriculum. This meant that practical subjects would be taught in the earlier years of study, while theoretical subjects would be reserved for the later years. Such a structure would make studies at higher education institutions comparable to the first cycle of university-level education (Gabrič, 2006; “Priporočilo o nadaljnji reformi visokošolskega študija na fakultetah Univerze v Ljubljani”, 1959). Students who successfully completed their education at one of the higher education institutions would have the opportunity to continue their studies at a comparable faculty in Ljubljana.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, a trend of establishing higher education institutions emerged across Yugoslavia (e.g., in Niš, Priština, Split). This phenomenon can be attributed to the federal government's efforts to ensure a rapid influx of educated professionals (Bračič, 1984). In Slovenia, Maribor emerged as a promising new centre for higher education, being one of the largest and most important industrial hubs in the country. A key condition for the city's further economic development was the availability of qualified professionals, which Maribor lacked due to an insufficient number of graduates from the University of Ljubljana.

Already in 1947, Maribor residents advocated for the planned Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry to be established in their city. Maribor had a tradition of agricultural education, and the largest concentration of agricultural land and the social agricultural sector was located in northeastern Slovenia, justifying the placement of the new faculty in this region. However, the proposal was not accepted. Similarly, in 1955, when discussions were held in Ljubljana about establishing an independent faculty or department for textiles, Maribor again expressed interest in hosting the institution, but was once more unsuccessful (Bračič, 2000).

Initiatives to establish higher education institutions in Maribor became increasingly pronounced, however, not all members of the University of Ljubljana were enthusiastic about the idea of forming a new higher education centre. Some professors in Ljubljana were concerned that the establishment of higher education institutions and their potential connection to Ljubljana faculties would lower the quality of study (Gabrič, 2006). It is important to note that not all university staff in Ljubljana opposed the establishment of a new centre. For example, Dolfe Vogelnik, Rector of the University of Ljubljana (1958–1961), stated in the journal *Naša sodobnost* in 1961 that the establishment of higher education institutions in Maribor represented a “spontaneous emergence of a new higher education nucleus as a necessary consequence of the economic and social role of Maribor and the Maribor basin” (Vogelnik, 1961, p. 164).

1.1 Establishment of the Junior College of Commerce

The Junior College of Commerce was the first to be established in Maribor. The Committee for Education and Culture of the Republic Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia discussed the draft law on its establishment at its 7th session on June 29, 1959. This session is particularly noteworthy because it included a debate on the possible location of the new school. Two cities were primarily considered: 1. Ljubljana, due to the anticipated close connection between the Junior College of Commerce and the Faculty of Economics, and 2. Maribor, which, according to Committee Chair Franc Perovšek, would “lose its provincial character” with the establishment of the school, thereby “narrowing the excessive gap between Maribor and Ljubljana, at least to some extent.” Despite some reservations from committee members, the Committee for Education and Culture issued a positive opinion on establishing the Junior College of Commerce in Maribor (Odbor za prosveto in kulturo Republiškega zbora Ljudske skupščine LRS, 1959b).

The Law on the Establishment of the Junior College of Commerce (“Zakon o ustanovitvi Višje komercialne šole”, 1959) was unanimously adopted at the 8th session of the Republic Assembly on July 2, 1959 (Obravnava in sklepanje o predlogu zakona o ustanovitvi Višje komercialne šole, 1959). However, the law that was published two weeks later, did not yet specify the location of the school (“Zakon o višji komercialni šoli”, 1959). Although the location was not formally determined, it was informally agreed that the school would operate in Maribor. Local authorities

in Maribor were informed of the expected location, allowing preparations to begin as early as July. In August, a preparatory committee was appointed to organize all necessary activities for the school's launch until the school board was elected (Bračić, 1984, pp. 36–37; Melanšek & Friš, 2023; Poročilo za 1. redno letno skupščino VKŠ Maribor, 1961). Although preparations were already underway, Maribor was officially confirmed as the school's seat only with the Decree on the Junior College of Commerce, published on September 17, 1959 (“Uredba o višji komercialni šoli”, 1959).



Figure 1: Ceremonial opening of the Junior College of Commerce in Maribor

Source: (Gostje in slušatelji na svečani otvoritvi VKŠ v Mariboru, 1960, p. 29)

The official opening of the Junior College of Commerce took place on October 23, 1959, in part of the building of the former Classical Gymnasium. The ceremony was attended by numerous prominent political and public figures, including Boris Kocjančič, member of the Executive Council of the PRS and Chair of the Council for Science and Culture, who officially opened the first higher education institution in Maribor. Regular lectures began three days later, initially in two departments: Foreign Trade and Industrial Economics. Soon after, two more departments were added: Accounting and Finance, and Banking (Bračić, 1960, 1984; Poročilo za 1.

redno letno skupščino VKŠ Maribor, 1961; Poročilo o delu šole v študijskem letu 1964–65 in 1965–66, 1965; Ustanavljanje višjih šol v Mariboru: dodatek k elaboratu, 1960).

The significance of the new school was also highlighted in the student newspaper *Tribuna* from Ljubljana:

“The importance of the new school lies not only in addressing the need for highly qualified personnel in the economy, but especially in the fact that it was established outside Ljubljana. This ends Ljubljana’s monopoly as the sole centre for educating highly qualified professionals. The school was established in an economic centre that has all the necessary conditions and perhaps the greatest need for such an institution. It also greatly facilitates access to education for children from working-class families.” (Višja komercialna šola v Mariboru odprta, 1959, p. 14)

In 1962, the school was renamed the Junior College of Economics and Commerce, to emphasize that it was not merely a narrowly focused vocational school but also bridged the gap between secondary and higher education in economics. For several years, the school aspired to switch to the second cycle and become a 4-year College. This goal was finally achieved on April 10, 1969, with the adoption of the Law on the College of Economics and Commerce in Maribor. The right to confer doctoral degrees was granted a few years later, at which point the school was fully equivalent to a faculty (Kerin, 1985; “Zakon o visoki ekonomsko-komercialni šoli v Mariboru”, 1969).

1.2 Establishment of the Junior Technical College

Just one month later, the republic authorities began reviewing final proposals for the establishment of the second Junior College in Maribor. It is important to emphasize that Maribor had long advocated for the establishment of a Junior Technical College. As MP Ludvik Gabrovšek noted, the demand for such a school in Maribor “surfaced with particular urgency once the Junior College of Commerce was established” (Odbor za prosveto in kulturo Republiškega zbora Ljudske skupščine LRS, 1959a). The draft law on the Junior Technical College was discussed at the 11th session of the Committee for Education and Culture on November 20, 1959, and at the 10th session of the Republic Assembly on November 26, 1959 (Obravnava in sklepanje

The District People's Committee of Maribor allocated premises for the Junior Technical College in the building of the Secondary Technical School. Interestingly, the school began regular lectures already in the spring semester, on March 1, 1960, although with a limited number of full-time students. The opening ceremony on March 5, 1960, was attended by Boris Kraigher, President of the Executive Council, who reportedly stated in his speech that the Junior College of Commerce and the Junior Technical College represented the beginnings of a future independent university in Maribor (Bračič, 1984; Gabrič, 2006).

Similar to the leadership of the Junior College of Economics and Commerce, the administration of the Junior Technical College also aimed to introduce second-cycle studies, particularly in mechanical engineering, due to a shortage of graduate engineers in Maribor and the broader region. The need for second-cycle mechanical engineering studies in Maribor was supported by industry representatives and the professional association of mechanical engineers and technicians. Preparations for the basic documentation began at the Junior Technical College already in spring 1970, but the entire process was delayed by three years. Eventually, the Law on the Technical College in Maribor was adopted on July 18, 1973, enabling second-cycle studies not only in mechanical engineering but also in other departments of the school (Kerin, 1985; "Zakon o Visoki tehniški šoli v Mariboru", 1973).

1.3 Maribor Becomes a New Centre for Higher Education: Establishment of the Junior College of Agronomy, Junior College of Dentistry, and Junior College of Law

The fact that Slovenian authorities recognized Maribor's potential as a new centre for higher education in Slovenia is evident in the establishment of five higher education institutions in "the city by the Drava River" within the span of one year. In addition to the previously mentioned Junior College of Commerce and Junior Technical College founded in 1959, three more institutions were established in the city in 1960, namely the Junior College of Agronomy, the Junior College of Dentistry, and the Junior College of Law. The Committee for Education and Culture of the Republic Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia discussed the establishment of these three schools at its 15th session on June 18, 1960 (Odbor za prosveto in kulturo Republiškega zbora Ljudske skupščine LRS, 1960). A few days later, on June 24, all three draft laws of the mentioned schools were reviewed and

adopted at the 14th session¹ of the Republic Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia (Obravnava in sklepanje o predlogu zakona o Višji agronomski šoli v Mariboru, 1960; Obravnava in sklepanje o predlogu zakona o Višji stomatološki šoli v Mariboru, 1960; Obravnava in sklepanje o predlogu zakona o Višji pravni šoli v Mariboru, 1960). The Law on the Junior College of Agronomy in Maribor (“Zakon o Višji agronomski šoli v Mariboru”, 1960), Law on the Junior College of Dentistry in Maribor (“Zakon o Višji stomatološki šoli v Mariboru”, 1960), and Law on the Junior College of Law in Maribor (“Zakon o Višji pravni šoli v Mariboru”, 1960) were published in the Official Gazette of the PRS (Sl. Uradni list LR Slovenija) on July 7.



Figure 3: Opening ceremony of the three new higher education institutions in Maribor

Source: (Fakulteta za kmetijstvo, 2005)

The Maribor newspaper *Večer* reported on the establishment of the new schools on June 25, 1960, stating:

“With the establishment of new higher education institutions, we are continuing the decentralization of higher, university-level education, which until now was concentrated in Ljubljana. We are organizing higher education institutions in

¹ The 14th session of the Republic Assembly took place on June 23–24, 1960, and also included proposals for the Junior College of Physical Education in Ljubljana and the Junior Maritime College in Piran.

locations the development and sufficient number of qualified professionals of which ensure a respectable professional level and direct connection with societal practice. This decentralization also enables greater inclusion of youth in higher education” (Tri nove višje šole v Mariboru, 1960, pp. 1–2).

The joint opening ceremony of the three new schools in Maribor was held on October 3, 1960, in the main hall of the Junior College of Agronomy. The event was attended by numerous prominent political and public figures (M. K., 1960; P. S., 1960). The keynote speaker was Ančka Kuhar, Vice President of the District People's Committee of Maribor (pictured in Figure 3), and the schools were officially opened by Boris Kraigher, President of the Executive Council of the Republic Assembly of the PRS. The ceremony was also covered in *Večer*, which emphasized Maribor’s emerging role as “a new centre of higher education in Slovenia and, in the future, undoubtedly a new university centre of Slovenia.” (Maribor mora bistveno prispevati k razvoju višjih šol v Sloveniji, 1960).

Initially, the three newly established schools were housed in existing buildings of other institutions. The Junior College of Agronomy was located in the building of the Agricultural Secondary School, the Junior College of Law was housed in the former Classical Gymnasium (which at that time also hosted the Junior College of Commerce), the Junior College of Dentistry faced space challenges and operated across multiple buildings, with its administrative offices located at Sodna ulica 15 (Bračič, 1984, 1991).

Both the Junior College of Law and the Junior College of Agronomy retained their status as higher education institutions at the time of the self-management agreement establishing the University of Maribor. Meanwhile, the Junior College of Dentistry was gradually phased out by the Law on the Termination of the Junior College of Dentistry in Maribor, adopted on October 2, 1969 (“Zakon o prenehanju Višje stomatološke šole v Mariboru”, 1969).²

² The law stipulated that the school would cease operations on September 30, 1970, with students allowed to complete exams and colloquia until September 30, 1971.

1.4 Establishment of the Pedagogical Academy

The last institution to be established among the first higher education schools in Maribor was the Pedagogical Academy Maribor. The initiative to establish a Junior College for training primary school teachers in Maribor³ was first proposed between the two world wars, and again in 1947, when the Junior Pedagogical College was founded in Ljubljana. However, in both cases, the idea remained unrealized (Bračič, 1984; Gabrič, 2006). More serious efforts to establish the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor, led by several local educators, began between 1956 and 1958. The Council for Education and the District People's Committee included the establishment of the Pedagogical Academy in their development plan for the Maribor region between 1957 and 1961, envisioning it as the first higher education institution in the city (Dosežen razvoj in perspektive razvoja šolstva v okraju Maribor 1961–1965, n.d.). At the 7th regular session of the Council for Education of the District People's Committee Maribor, held on October 2, 1958, the establishment of the academy was planned for 1959 (Okrajni ljudski odbor Maribor, 1958).

Despite the desire and efforts to establish pedagogical studies in Maribor, these attempts were unsuccessful, by that time, five junior colleges had already been founded in the city. A breakthrough came when a subcommittee advocating for the establishment of a Junior Pedagogical College proposed encouraging students who had studied at the pedagogical school in Ljubljana but had not completed their studies to enrol and continue their studies in Maribor. They suggested establishing a Centre for Part-Time Studies of the Ljubljana Junior Pedagogical College in Maribor and selecting lecturers from among Maribor's secondary school teachers. Ljubljana approved the proposal, and by early 1961, part-time students began their studies at the higher education level in Maribor, under the Ljubljana school (Bračič, 1984; Melanšek & Friš, 2023; Odločba: Podkomisija za ustanovitev Višje pedagoške šole v Mariboru, 1960). At the end of October 1960, the newspaper *Večer* published an article titled: "V Mariboru tudi Višja pedagoška šola: januarja 1961 bo začel v Mariboru z delom samostojni oddelek Višje pedagoške šole v Ljubljani; za začetek samo pomoč izrednim slušateljem; v jeseni samostojna višja šola za vzgojo učiteljskega kadra za osnovne šole!" (Eng. *Junior Pedagogical College Also in Maribor: In*

³ Teacher education in Maribor had a long tradition. Its beginnings date back to 1802, when two candidates at the Maribor "Main School" took an exam after a three-month preparatory course, qualifying them as organists, sacristans, and teachers in public schools (Bračič, 1986).

January 1961, an Independent Department of the Ljubljana Junior Pedagogical College will Begin Operating in Maribor; initially only support for part-time students; in autumn, an independent junior college for training primary school teachers!) (V Mariboru tudi Višja pedagoška šola, 1960).

On June 22, 1961, at its 23rd session, the Committee for Education and Culture of the Republic Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia reviewed and adopted the draft law on the establishment of the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor. On the same day, the Committee for Government Organization and Administration issued a positive report, followed two days later by the Legislative Committee (Bračič, 1984; Gabrič, 2006; Priloge k predlogu zakona o ustanovitvi Pedagoške akademije v Mariboru, 1961; Odbor za prosveto in kulturo Republiškega zbora Ljudske skupščine LRS, 1961). The Republic Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia discussed the proposal on June 26, 1961 (Obravnava in sklepanje o predlogu zakona o ustanovitvi Pedagoške akademije v Mariboru, 1961). The Law on the Establishment of the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor (“Zakon o ustanovitvi Pedagoške akademije v Mariboru“, 1961) was unanimously adopted at that session and published three days later in the Official Gazette of the People's Republic of Slovenia.

This marked the establishment of the first college in Maribor, as all previously founded schools were only junior colleges. Notably, the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor was also the first pedagogical academy in Slovenia, since the Ljubljana Junior Pedagogical College was only transformed into an academy in 1964 (Bračič, 1984; Gabrič, 2006). The District People's Committee Maribor was responsible for providing premises for the new academy, initially allocating part of the building of the former Classical Gymnasium, which was already partially occupied by the Junior College of Law (Bračič, 1984, 1986).

Admission to the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor was open to graduates of all secondary schools, and even those who had not completed secondary school but had four years of relevant pedagogical experience (subject to a qualifying exam). Special aptitude tests were required for visual arts and music education programmes. The academy began its first academic year with 52 full-time and 204 part-time students, 164 of whom transferred from the aforementioned Centre for Part-Time

Studies of the Ljubljana Junior Pedagogical College in Maribor. Lectures for full-time students began on November 3, 1961 (Bračič, 1984; Melanšek & Friš, 2023).

In 1969, the Pedagogical Academy in Maribor suffered a setback due to the new Higher Education Act, which in Article 92 stipulated that the same provisions applied to the Pedagogical Academies in Ljubljana and Maribor as to junior colleges, effectively downgrading both academies to two-year junior colleges (Bračič, 1984, 1986; “Ukaz o razglasitvi zakona o visokem šolstvu”, 1969).

2 The Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor – Predecessor of the University of Maribor

Significant changes brought about by the emergence of new higher education institutions in Maribor were reflected in the adoption of a new law at the end of 1960: the Higher Education Act of the People's Republic of Slovenia, which replaced the University of Ljubljana Act (“Zakon o visokem šolstvu v Ljudski republiki Sloveniji”, 1960; “Zakon o Univerzi v Ljubljani”, 1957).

The newly adopted Act stated in its first article that at least three higher education institutions – faculties, colleges, art academies, and junior colleges – could be merged into an appropriate association (“Zakon o visokem šolstvu v Ljudski republiki Sloveniji”, 1960, p. 489). Based on this provision, the District People's Committee Maribor, together with five junior colleges in the city, proposed the establishment of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor in spring 1961. The Maribor junior colleges needed a coordinating body to harmonize their operations, address issues related to teaching staff, facilities, student welfare, and other shared concerns (Bračič, 1991; Gabrič, 2006; Poročilo za 2. volilno skupščino Združenja visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru, 1965).

On May 23, 1961, the Republic Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia adopted the Law on the Establishment of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor (Obravnava in sklepanje o predlogu zakona o ustanovitvi Združenja visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru, 1961; “Zakon o ustanovitvi Združenja visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru”, 1961). At the founding assembly of the association, held on December 9, 1961, six institutions participated, as the newly established Pedagogical Academy Maribor joined the original five. According to the

newspaper *Delo*, the most extensive discussions at the assembly concerned the transition of Maribor graduates from junior colleges to second-cycle studies at faculties. Two weeks after the assembly, the Academic and Study Library Maribor also joined the association (Bračič, 1991; Gabrič, 2006; Poročilo za 2. volilno skupščino Združenja visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru, 1965; “Šolski sistem usklajamo s potrebami družbe”, 1961).

The Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor was responsible for the development, coordination, and quality of teaching and scientific research at the member institutions. It also decided on all common matters defined by the higher education act, its statute, or special agreements. The association was led by a Head elected from among the professors of the member institutions. The activities of the association were governed by the Council of the Association and the Pedagogical-Scientific Council of the Association, which appointed special committees for key areas and established dedicated funds, such as the Study Committee, the Committee for Elections and Appointments, and the Kidrič Award Fund for students. The Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor had almost the same rights and responsibilities toward its member institutions as a university had toward its faculties (Bračič, 1975b; Združenje visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru, 1971).

3 Efforts to Establish the University of Maribor

As recalled by Vladimir Bračič in his work *Prispevki za zgodovino visokega šolstva v Mariboru* (Eng. *Contributions to the History of Higher Education in Maribor*), preparations for the establishment of the University of Maribor began in the summer of 1971, following the adoption of the first draft of the Resolution on the Long-Term Development of the Socialist Republic (SR) of Slovenia by the Executive Council. Due to the anticipated increase in the number of students in the coming years, it was planned that two university centres would operate in the territory of the SR of Slovenia by 1985. In the interim period, intensive preparations began for the development of higher education in Maribor, with Vladimir Bračič, a member of the Executive Council of the SR of Slovenia, playing a key role. Bračič had already been instrumental in the founding of the first colleges and was also elected director of the Pedagogical Academy. In this context, it is not surprising that he immediately informed the head of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor about the Executive Council’s position regarding the establishment of a new

university centre in Maribor, marking the beginning of preparations for the new university (Bračič, 1984).

Franci Pivec, assistant to the association's secretary general, played an important role in drafting the long-term development concept for higher education in Maribor (Bračič, 1984). Pivec's proposal was discussed on September 29, 1971, at the 4th session of the Council of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor. As recorded in the minutes, a lively debate took place during the discussion of this item, and various suggestions and comments were made on the draft. The Council adopted the basic concept of transforming the Maribor association into a university and tasked its head with preparing the necessary analyses and projections. They also proposed the creation of a research project to be financed by the Republic's educational community. The Council decided that the development plan of the association up to 1975 should be considered part of a long-term strategy. Taking into account the comments from the discussion, the plan was deemed realistic, and the head was authorized to submit the appropriately prepared document to local and republic institutions (Svet Združenja visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru, 1971). Based on the concepts adopted at this session, the Association prepared a comprehensive 43-page document in October titled *Razvojni načrt visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru: za obdobje 1971–1975* (Eng. *Development Plan of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor: for the period 1971–1975*), which envisioned the establishment of Slovenia's second university centre in Maribor, with approximately 8,000 students (Razvojni načrt visokošolskih zavodov v Mariboru: za obdobje 1971–1975, 1971). In the first half of November 1971, the Association drafted a research project for organizing the new University of Maribor, setting four key goals for the study: 1. to develop a model for organizing the new university that would stimulate positive changes throughout the Slovenian higher education system, 2. to propose an institutional structure that would best encourage creative and effective participation of all participants in the teaching and research process, 3. to create a concept enabling direct communication with industry and the social environment, and 4. to design a detailed system for collecting and processing data on activities and resources in higher education. The report also outlined the research tasks needed to achieve these goals ("Poročilo o poteku projekta univerze v Mariboru", n.d.; ⁴ *Skica predloga raziskovalnega projekta modela organizacije nove univerze v Mariboru, 1971*).

⁴ Although the report is undated, the text indicates it was written after November 27, 1972.

Already in the second half of November, the Maribor Municipal Assembly appointed a special commission tasked with preparing a proposal for the spatial layout of the university. In the initial phase of the commission's operation, the Maribor Institute for Urban Planning proposed locations for several higher education facilities, including the future rectorate at Slomškov trg, in the building of the City Savings Bank. The undeveloped space behind it was designated for the construction of a new university library building. Vladimir Bračič, who was a member of the commission, also mentions it in his work *Prispevki za zgodovino visokega šolstva v Mariboru* (Eng. *Contributions to the History of Higher Education in Maribor*). He was likewise a member of the commission for the development of the Maribor higher education centre, appointed on January 20, 1972, by the Pedagogical-Scientific Council of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor. According to Bračič, this commission regularly addressed all major issues related to the university's establishment and was very active, reportedly meeting ten times over a six-month period (Bračič, 1984).

From the timeline of the university project's early development, as outlined in the Report on the Progress of the University Project in Maribor, it is evident that during this period, the projected costs for the two-year project were defined, and a funding proposal was submitted to the Executive Committee of RIS. In the request, the Association committed to preparing a detailed programme for the transformation to a university by 1975. The request was approved on January 18, 1972, when the president of the RIS Executive Committee informed them that the project would be funded as requested ("Poročilo o poteku projekta univerze v Mariboru", n.d.).

Discussions about the new university in Maribor were not limited to the mentioned commissions; they also took place at various conferences. On December 17, 1971, Maribor and Ljubljana students discussed the establishment of the university in Maribor at the first session of the Republic Conference of the Association of Slovenian Student Communities (Čerin, 1971). At the conference, Franci Pivec presented the draft project for the future university in Maribor. Among the key challenges expected during the transitional period were securing qualified staff and adequate funding (Šrmpf, 1971a). According to the newspaper *Včer*, student responses to the idea of a second Slovenian university were very positive and encouraging, as it was believed that it would motivate the University of Ljubljana to engage in constructive dialogue, contributing to the creation of a modern university (Šrmpf, 1971b).

A few days later, on December 23, 1971, the topic was also discussed at the first session of the Conference of the League of Communists of Slovenia (Sl. *Zveza komunistov Slovenije*, ZKS) for Higher Education Institutions in Maribor. It was emphasized that the future university in Maribor could not be considered “modern” without a Marxist chair or institute focused on experimental social sciences. On that day, Vladimir Bračič presented the current status, outlined the work programme, and highlighted the key role that the League of Communists of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor would play (D. V., 1971; F. Š., 1971; *Vabilo na prvo sejo konference ZKS visokošolskih zavodov Maribor*, 1971).

From at least mid-December 1971, the idea of a new university reached the broader public, as it was reported in several articles by the major Slovenian newspapers *Večer* and *Delo*. Both papers informed the public about the progress of discussions at the conferences and presented the work done so far in detail. For example, Drago Jančar wrote in *Večer*:

“Theoretical assumptions about the necessity of a new Slovenian university had barely settled into the consciousness of Slovenians when the staff at Maribor’s higher education institutions already offered the Development Plan of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor for the period 1971–1975.” (Jančar, 1972, p. 2)

In Jančar’s article, the development plan for the Maribor university was also presented to the wider public. According to the development plan, the University of Maribor was intended to relieve the University of Ljubljana and to develop disciplines connected to the advancement of modern economic and production systems. These disciplines were categorized into three groups: 1. disciplines necessary for the effective implementation of compulsory eight-year education; 2. disciplines required for the realization of modern technologies, and 3. disciplines essential for the management and organization of economic-production systems (referring to a cluster of legal, economic, and sociological sciences). According to Drago Jančar’s findings, these three clusters of Maribor’s higher education project clearly indicated the formation of a comprehensive university that would foster both the humanities and technical sciences. Regarding higher education in Maribor, Jančar further noted: “Higher education in Maribor has once and for all decided not to be merely a producer of workforce directly needed by the economy, but also a creator of innovative educational and scientific processes.” (Jančar, 1972)

In February 1972, a three-day consultation was held for the presidents of the educational and cultural councils of the federal assembly and the republic and regional assemblies. At the end of the consultation, the participants visited Maribor to learn about the plans for gradually transforming the existing higher education institutions into Slovenia's second university centre. According to newspaper reports, guests from other republics were particularly interested in the guidelines for the future development of the university centre, both from the perspective of regional economic and cultural needs and the broader development of higher education in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (J. S., 1972; "Od višjih šol do univerze", 1972).

In April 1972, the Maribor university project proposal was officially approved. Vladimir Bračič was appointed as the head of the research project, and Franci Pivec as the project secretary. Numerous individuals were invited to participate in the project, each responsible for specific "research tasks" (Bračič, 1984; "Poročilo o poteku projekta univerze v Mariboru", n.d.). At this point, it is worth highlighting the mentioned tasks and all the contributors:

1. University of Maribor in Self-Managed Socio-Economic Relations: Dušan Kidrič (Advisor, RIS Ljubljana).
2. Development of Profiles and Staffing Needs Relevant to the Future Maribor University: Pavle Kogej (Advisor, Republic Employment Institute Ljubljana).
3. Spatial Design of the University of Maribor: Peter Gabrijelčič (Assistant, Department of Urbanism, FAGG).
4. Organizational Model of the University of Maribor: Vladimir Bračič (Professor, PA), Avguštin Lah (Associate Professor, VŠOD), Ciril Mikl (Associate Professor, VEKŠ), Franci Pivec (Research Associate, ZVZ).
5. Methods for Designing University Curricula: Bogomir Koželj (Professor, VŠOD Kranj).
6. Content and Scope of General Knowledge in University Curricula: Dimitrij Sergejev (Assistant Professor, FF Zagreb).
7. Content and Scope of General Knowledge in University Curricula: Rudi Rizman (Assistant, FSPN Ljubljana, Department of Philosophy, FF Ljubljana).
8. Issues in Higher Education Didactics: Zdenko Medveš and Beno Jurman (Researchers, Pedagogical Institute Ljubljana).

9. University in the System of Lifelong Education – Model Development: Stevan Bezdanov (Professor, FPN Belgrade), Lujo Polanec (Assistant Professor, VAS Maribor), Franci Pivec (Research Associate, ZVZ).
10. Organization of Scientific Libraries at the University of Maribor: Bruno Hartman (Director, Academic and Study Library Maribor).⁵
11. Concept for the Information and Documentation System at the University of Maribor: Stane Kos (Senior Librarian, VŠK).
12. Guidelines and Organization of Scientific Research at the University of Maribor: Milan Pintar (Advisor, RS SRC Ljubljana).
13. Development of Student Welfare Institutions at the University of Maribor: Karel Koren (Director, ŠD Maribor), Franci Pivec (Research Associate, ZVZ).
14. Projection of Staffing Needs for the University of Maribor: Franci Pivec (Research Associate, ZVZ). Bibliography on Higher Education Worldwide: Franci Pivec (Research Associate, ZVZ). (“Poročilo o poteku projekta univerze v Mariboru”, n.d.).

In April 1972, the newspaper *Večer* played a significant role in promoting the establishment of the University of Maribor and in gaining broader public support for its creation. Editor, publicist, writer, and translator Franc Šrmpf published an article on April 18 in *Večer* about the importance of the university for the city and its future development. In the article, the author emphasized the far-reaching significance of founding a university in Maribor, suggesting that it could break the city's economic stagnation, enhance its attractiveness, and prevent population outflow to larger centres or abroad. He pointed out that the university would provide essential scientific support that Maribor's companies had previously sought elsewhere, and contribute to the city's broader development and recognition both within Slovenia and internationally. Šrmpf concluded the article in the style of a skilled propagandist:

“The acquisition of a new university in Maribor is so significant that it cannot be fully described in a single article. Among other things, it represents a window to the world, as the university city by the Drava River will henceforth be able to engage in more qualified dialogue with neighbours near and far, both domestically and across

⁵ A special agreement was signed between the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor and the Academic and Study Library, establishing a thematic collection on higher education issues in the library, forming a basis for further research in this field.

borders. The new university in Maribor marks this city's entry into Europe." (Šrmpf, 1972a, p. 3)

A similar perspective was presented in an undated text titled *Prostorska problematika nove univerze v Mariboru* (Eng. *Spatial Issues of the New University in Maribor*), authored within the Association of Higher Education Institutions Maribor. The importance of the university for the city was noted in the report: "A university gives a city, as a living environment, a specific qualification as a highly developed urban centre." It also highlighted numerous benefits the university would bring to the city, such as influx of financial resources, attraction of researchers, who represent an invaluable source of innovation, increased access to higher education for individuals in the region – estimated to rise by as much as 50% ("Prostorska problematika nove univerze v Mariboru", n.d.).

In April, *Večer* organized a round table discussion on the university in Maribor, inviting representatives of institutions involved in its planning. The discussion was moderated by journalists Franc Šrmpf and France Forstnerič, and participants included: Bogdan Volavšek (Head of the Association of Higher Education Institutions), Franci Pivec (Assistant Secretary of the Association), Vladimir Bračič (Director of the Pedagogical Academy), Marjan Šrbinec, Vili Premzl, Janez Kreševič, Ljubo Humek, Branko Kocmut, Borut Pečenko, Ivan Oman, and Bogdan Raichenberg. *Večer* published the round table discussion in two parts – first at the end of April and the second in mid-May. The main topics included the necessity of establishing a new university in Maribor, its importance for the city, years of efforts leading to its creation, and the issue of space and facilities ("Nova univerza, kaj to pomeni? 1. del", 1972; "Nova univerza, kaj to pomeni? 2. del", 1972).

On June 22, 1972, the Council of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor discussed the proposal for the urban development plan of the new university in Maribor. It was projected that Maribor would become a university centre with approximately 8,000 students within ten years, requiring between 37 and 64 hectares of land. The session also addressed the issue of housing for professors (Kos, 1972).

A few days later, on June 28, the first joint meeting of the organizational committee for the University of Maribor Project was held. The participants discussed the foundational concept of the university in accordance with the higher education

legislation of the time, the expectations of existing schools, and even broader ambitions, on a “global” level, which proved to be extremely challenging. At the meeting, Vladimir Bračič presented his proposal titled Basic Guidelines for the Content and Organizational Model of the Future University of Maribor. However, participants found the proposal too radical, claiming it exceeded the boundaries of conservative higher education legislation. At the same time, the meeting further radicalised the vision, demanding the elimination of all traditional notions of a university. The report explained that the way out of this complex situation was through public debate at all levels across Slovenia. Numerous scientists, cultural workers, political officials, and business leaders participated. The founding of the University of Maribor was widely reported by all Slovenian media – newspapers, radio, and television. The report noted that this approach led to certain positive outcomes, especially in terms of gauging public acceptance of the initiative (Bračič, 1984; “Poročilo o poteku projekta univerze v Mariboru”, n.d.).



Figure 4: First Consultation of the University of Maribor Project, June 28, 1972

Source: (1. posvetovanje: Projekt Univerze v Mariboru, 28. 6. 1972)

In September and October 1972, numerous republic officials responded to the invitation of Bogdan Volavšek, head of the Association of Higher Education Institutions, and visited Maribor. By autumn 1972, discussions about the

establishment of the University of Maribor had moved beyond academic circles and commissions to political decision-makers: council members, deputies, the municipal assembly, and socio-political organizations (F. F., 1972). Debates also took place within various professional associations and city political organizations, where the concept of the academic and spatial development of the new Slovenian university received broad support (M. K., 1972), although there was also some controversy regarding its location (Čepič, 1972; Jerman, 1972).

On September 7, 1972, the Extended Executive Board of the Association of Engineers and Technicians Maribor, representing 19 societies, discussed the university in Maribor. The meeting expressed strong support for its establishment and advocated for its location in the old city centre on the left bank of the Drava River, where other higher education and cultural institutions were already operating (Butinar, 1972; Čerin, 1972; Stališča upravnega odbora Zveze društev inženirjev in tehnikov Maribor o ustanovitvi Univerze v Mariboru in o njeni prostorski zasnovi, 1972).

A few days later, on September 12, 1972, the Education and Training Section of the Municipal Conference of the Socialist Alliance of Working People (Sl. *Socialistična zveza delovnega ljudstva*, SZDL) held a session in Maribor. The section supported the academic and organizational concept of the university and proposed that the executive board of the municipal SZDL conference, as well as representatives of the republic SZDL conference and the broader public, be informed. *Večer* reported on the session, highlighting the views of Vladimir Bračič and Bogdan Volavšek that: “It is no longer a question of whether the university in Maribor will be established, but rather what kind of university, when, and where.” (F. F., 1972)

On September 18, 1972, the Boards of the Associations of Lawyers and Lawyers in Industry also supported the university’s establishment and advocated for its location in the city centre (F. Š., 1972; “Pravniki za univerzo”; Društvo pravnikov in Društvo pravnikov v gospodarstvu, 1972). On September 19, 1972, the Management and Supervisory Board of the Association of Economists Maribor expressed a positive opinion on the university’s establishment and spatial design, also supporting its location in the city centre (Mnenje o ustanovitvi in prostorski zasnovi univerze v Mariboru, 1972). That same day, the Council of the Association of Cultural Workers, composed of 16 societies and activities, discussed the spatial issues of the new

university and supported its location in the old part of the city on the left bank of the Drava River. Their position paper indicated that the consultation was initiated by the Association of Higher Education Institutions Maribor (Stališča kolegija zveze kulturnih delavcev v Mariboru, 1972).

Due to financial constraints, the idea of a campus-style university was deemed infeasible for Maribor. Therefore, the foundation of the new university had to be based on the facilities of existing higher education institutions. The report titled *Prostorska problematika nove univerze v Mariboru* (Eng. *Spatial Issues of the New University in Maribor*) listed seven requirements for the university's location:

1. The university, as a unified entity, must enable physical communication between its components.
2. It must have a meaningful centre – not just geometric or symbolic.
3. It must incorporate existing higher education capacities.
4. It must maintain a living connection with the city centre (cultural and socio-political institutions).
5. It must be visible in the city's skyline and have a relatively complete image.
6. It must allow for equal distribution of information and innovation.
7. It must offer sufficient potential for spatial expansion. (“Prostorska problematika nove univerze v Mariboru”, n.d.).

In November 1972, students from the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Ljubljana opened an exhibition of conceptual designs and models for the future university in Maribor at the Youth Club. At the same time, the Maribor Student Community organized a discussion on the university's spatial concept. However, the event saw little public and student interest, which *Večer* summarized with the subtitle: “Students organized a discussion and no one came” (Šrimpf, 1972b).

On November 27, 1972, the second joint meeting of the organizational committee for the University of Maribor Project was held. The committee reviewed the results of the public debate about the idea of a university in Maribor and finalized the university's foundational model, enabling further work on individual research tasks. Despite progress, challenges remained, particularly regarding the university's organizational model and interpreting guidelines from constitutional amendments (“Poročilo o poteku projekta univerze v Mariboru”, n.d.).

These debates caused delays in the original timeline, prompting in the Report on the Progress of the University Project in Maribor a proposal to extend the project deadline from 1973 to May 1974. The report concluded that this adjustment would not significantly hinder the university's establishment. The report, although undated, clearly originates from after November 27, 1972, and outlines the following research tasks that had reached their final phase: analysis of spatial planning, methods for designing university curricula, organization of scientific libraries, development of student welfare institutions, projection of staffing needs and bibliography on higher education worldwide. Other research tasks were still in progress at the time the report was written, with two showing noticeable delays: content and scope of general knowledge as well as issues in higher education didactics ("Poročilo o poteku projekta univerze v Mariboru", n.d.).

In February 1973, Vladimir Bračič, in agreement with officials from the Assembly of the SR of Slovenia, prepared a draft law for transforming the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor into the University of Maribor, along with a detailed explanation. Bračič's concept of the university in Maribor as a working organization with basic units met with resistance in Ljubljana. At the same time, Ljubljana was preparing a new higher education act, and republic authorities, including the Executive Council, felt it would be better to postpone the transformation until the new act was adopted. As a result, Bračič's draft never became a formal proposal (Bračič, 1984).

In his Contributions, Bračič highlights a key event that significantly influenced the final academic and organizational model of the university in Maribor: a meeting on May 23, 1973, with Sergej Kraigher, President of the Assembly of the SR of Slovenia, and Ela Ulrih – Atena, Chair of the Committee for Education and Culture of the Republic Assembly. In addition to association officials, the meeting was attended by directors of all junior colleges, the secretary of the Intermunicipal Council of the League of Communists Maribor, and the president of the Maribor Municipal Assembly (Bračič, 1974).

This meeting appears to have been pivotal, as the following month Bračič prepared a study titled Academic Concept and Organizational Model of the University of Maribor, which presented the development to date and outlined the core academic and organizational guidelines for the new university. In the study, the University of

Maribor is envisioned as a self-managed community of higher education basic and working organizations, governed by delegates representing academic staff, students, and users that were being particularly interested in the establishment of a higher education organization, either for training personnel or for research collaboration. According to Bračič's study, the basic or working higher education organization was intended to foster the closest possible connection and provide a foundation for equal exchange of various types of work. At the same time, it aimed to generate new self-managed socialist socio-economic relations. This self-management concept of the new university was fully aligned with the principles of the later adopted Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and the Higher Education Act (Bračič, 1974; Utemeljitev samoupravnega sporazuma o združitvi v univerzo Maribor, 1975).



Figure 5: Rectorate of the University of Maribor at Krekova ulica 2⁶

Source: ("Skozi oči zgodovine: Rektorat Univerze v Mariboru skozi čas", 2025, p. 54)

⁶ Despite earlier discussions about placing the rectorate at Slomškov trg, the University of Maribor's rectorate operated for several years at Krekova ulica 2, where the Association of Higher Education Institutions had previously been located (Kupna pogodba, 1971).

On June 26, 1973, the Maribor Municipal Assembly addressed the spatial needs of the new university and decided that the prominent building of the former German Credit Bank at Slomškov trg would be allocated for the Junior College of Law and the future university rectorate. The adjacent space was reserved for the future university library, as originally proposed in 1971 (*Problematika in program aktiviranja zgradbe na Slomškovem trgu za prostorske potrebe Univerze v Mariboru*, 1975). Further details on the city's role in establishing the university in Maribor are found in the document *Osnove družbeno gospodarskega razvoja občine Maribor v letih 1974 in 1975* (Eng. *Foundations of the Socio-Economic Development of the Municipality of Maribor for 1974 and 1975*), adopted on March 29, 1974 and published in *Medobčinski uradni vestnik* on June 21, 1974. It states:

“The municipal assembly will participate in the development of the university centre by providing material resources and other activities within its capabilities and jurisdiction to support the long-term rational development of Maribor's higher education centre. Higher education must not operate solely on a regional level, but more broadly across Slovenia, while also connecting with the economy and public services, and responding to their needs.” (*Osnove družbeno gospodarskega razvoja občina Maribor v letih 1974 in 1975*”, 1974, p. 218)

During the university's founding efforts, intensive preparations were also underway for the construction of a new building for the Academic and Study Library, documented by Bruno Hartman in his extensive work titled *Izhodišča za idejni projekt nove knjižnične zgradbe Visokošolske in študijske knjižnice Maribor* (Eng. *Foundations for the Conceptual Design of the New Library Building*) (*Izhodišča za idejni projekt nove knjižnične zgradbe visokošolske in študijske knjižnice Maribor*, 1974).

In April 1974, the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia held a session where the draft act on higher education was adopted. According to Bračič, the draft stipulated that higher education working organizations must merge into universities through a self-management agreement (Bračič, 1984). The student publication *Katedra*, published by Maribor students, organized a round table discussion on the draft act, which had been released for public debate (Figure 6). Participants included: Dušan Bobek (Director, Junior College of Economics and Commerce), Vladimir Bračič (Head, Association of Higher Education Institutions Maribor), Josip Butinar (Director, Junior College of Agronomy) and Franci Pivec (Head of Development, Association of Higher Education Institutions) (D. K., 1974).



Figure 6: Round table Discussion on the Draft Act on Higher Education

Source: (D. K., 1974)

In early September 1974, a broader consultation was held with delegates from the higher education working organizations included in the Association. They discussed the draft act and tasked the council of school directors with preparing the core principles for a self-management agreement to merge the institutions into the University of Maribor. Based on these principles, a special working group prepared a draft of the agreement, completed already by February 13, 1975. The Council of the Association reviewed it on February 26, 1975, and decided to distribute it to schools for public debate, scheduled to last until the end of March. At a follow-up consultation on April 7, delegates agreed to prepare a final proposal for the self-management agreement, incorporating feedback from the public debate (Bračič, 1984).

On April 29, 1975, the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia officially adopted the new Higher Education Act during sessions of the Chamber of Associated Labour, Chamber of Municipalities, and Socio-Political Chamber. During these sessions, extensive discussions took place on the new act, including on the new university in Maribor (15. seja Zbora občin, 1975; 15. seja Zbora združenega

dela, 1975). A particularly important statement came from Janez Milčinski, Rector of the University of Ljubljana, who said:

“I would especially like to welcome the decision reflected in the text of the proposal you are voting on today, which was already mentioned in the address by comrade dr. Lah. It concerns the adoption of a multi-centred system of higher education, to be realized through the establishment of the University of Maribor. I am convinced that the Maribor Association of Higher Education Institutions, the higher and vocational schools operating there, and the staff involved have earned this right through persistent, years-long efforts. On behalf of the University, I welcome the conclusion of these efforts, which promises the imminent establishment of a university in Maribor. I am confident that this will bring us in line with the development of higher education in other republics, as our system has progressed in recent years and will hopefully continue to do so.” (15. seja Zbora združenega dela, 1975, p. 9)

The Higher Education Act was published in the Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia on May 13, 1975. Two articles are particularly noteworthy: Article 9 mandating that higher education working organizations must merge into universities to ensure a unified system of operations as well as Article 98 requiring that higher education basic and working organizations, communities, universities, and associated labour organizations align their structure and activities with the provisions of the act, and adopt or harmonize self-management agreements and statutes within six months of the act's enactment. (“Zakon o visokem šolstvu”, 1975). According to Bračič, this provided a solid basis to revise the draft self-management agreement into a formal proposal (Bračič, 1984).

Already a day before, on May 12, 1975, two important sessions were held in Maribor. The Commission for the Spatial Allocation of the University of Maribor discussed the proposed layout of the university and the Junior College of Law. The council of school directors adopted the draft self-management agreement and defined the procedure for its review and adoption by the higher education institutions (Vabilo na sejo komisije za prostorsko razmejitev univerze v Mariboru, 1975; Problematika in program aktiviranja zgradbe na Slomškovem trgu za prostorske potrebe Univerze v Mariboru, 1975). A concrete example of this process took place at the Pedagogical Academy. On May 14, 1975, the text of the Self-Management Agreement on the

Merger into the University of Maribor was made available for public debate among staff and students of the Pedagogical Academy. The debate lasted one week, after which department heads submitted written comments. By May 31, the agreement had to be approved by the workers' assembly, the students' assembly, and the academy council (Javna razprava Pedagoške akademije v Mariboru, 1975).

At the end of May, the student publication *Katedra* published an article by Bračič, in which he explained and justified the proposed self-management agreement on the merger into the University of Maribor over two pages (Bračič, 1975a). This publication ensured that even students not actively involved in extracurricular activities were informed about the proposal.

4 Establishment of the University of Maribor

On June 3, 1975, the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor submitted the Self-Management Agreement on the Merger into the University of Maribor to the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, which placed it on the agenda of the 18th session of the Chamber of Associated Labour and the Chamber of Municipalities. On June 12, authorized delegates formally signed the Self-Management Agreement on the Merger into the University of Maribor. The founding members were the College of Economics and Commerce Maribor, Technical College Maribor, College of Work Organization Kranj, Pedagogical Academy Maribor, Junior College of Law Maribor, Junior College of Agronomy Maribor as well as the Academic and Study Library Maribor. The approval process continued on July 2, 1975, when the agreement was discussed in both chambers. It was approved unanimously in the Chamber of Associated Labour, where 119 delegates voted in favour, with 1 abstention and in the Chamber of Municipalities, where all 53 delegates voted in favour. Thus, the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia officially confirmed the Decree on the Approval of the Self-Management Agreement on the Merger into the University of Maribor, published in the *Official Gazette* on July 11, 1975 (18. seja Zbora združenega dela, 1975; 18. seja Zbora občin, 1975, "Odlok o potrditvi samoupravnega sporazuma o združitvi v Univerzo v Mariboru", 1975). On July 3, 1975, the Council of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor officially declared the establishment of the University of Maribor, and Vladimir Bračič was appointed as its first rector (Bračič, 1984).



Figure 7: One of the earliest documents bearing the new seal of the University of Maribor⁷

Source: (Pismo tovarišu Štularju, 1975)

4.1 Ceremonial Proclamation of the University of Maribor

The formal proclamation of the University of Maribor took place on September 18, 1975, at 10 a.m. in the Union Hall in Maribor. The ceremony began with fanfares announcing the start of the event, followed by the arrival of Rectors and Vice-Rectors from Yugoslav universities, as well as representatives from eight universities and higher education institutions from Austria, East Germany, Italy, and Hungary. The event was attended by prominent representatives of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, including: President of the Presidency Sergej Kraigher, President of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia France Popit, President of the Assembly Marijan Breclj, President of the Executive Council of the Assembly Andrej Marinc, President of the Republic Conference of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia Mitja Ribičič, General Secretary of Slovenian Trade Unions Ivanka Vrhovščak, President of the Republic Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia Ljubo Jasnič, Member of the Federation and Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia Vida Tomšič, representatives of the Yugoslav People's Army, delegates of Slovenians living abroad, and other public socio-political workers (Bračič, 1976; Forstnerič, 1975; V. V., 1975).

⁷ Already at the end of June 1975, new official seals for the University of Maribor were ordered from a printing house in Ljubljana. The seals featured the word "University" in the upper arc and "in Maribor" in the lower arc. The coat of arms of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia was in the centre. This design complied with the Higher Education Act, which required universities to include the republic's coat of arms in their official seal (Naročilo izdelave pečatov, June 30, 1975).



Figure 8: Rectors of Yugoslav Universities and Other Honoured Guests

Source: (Čerin, 1975)

The ceremony was officially opened by Miran Potrč, President of the Council of the University of Maribor and member of the Executive Committee of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia. In his address, he emphasized the importance of merging higher education institutions into a university and highlighted its role in educating professionals who would also be active and responsible participants in self-governing decision-making. He stressed that the formal establishment of the university was not the end of the process, but merely the first step toward a new model of self-governing operation involving all university stakeholders: students, teachers, and delegates of associated labour. The University of Maribor was envisioned to further develop as an open institution connected to the working environment, where professionally qualified and socially engaged teachers would ensure high-quality and Marxist-oriented education and scientific work (Bračič, 1976).

The participants of the ceremonial event were addressed by Andrej Marinc, President of the Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, who described the establishment of the University of Maribor as a significant milestone for the development of higher education and the broader social progress of the

Socialist Republic of Slovenia. He also emphasized that the complete transformation of education would require great effort from both Slovenian universities. In his extended speech, which was published in full the next day in *Večer*, Marinc presented the rector's chain to Vladimir Bračič, the first rector of the University of Maribor, symbolizing the responsibility that comes with the position (“Svečana razglasitev univerze bo del zgodovine Maribora”, 1975).



Figure 9: Speech by Andrej Marinc, President of the Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia

Source: (Cvetnič, 1975)

Janez Milčinski, Rector of the University of Ljubljana, expressed his university's support for efforts to reform the educational process, strengthen self-management, promote the free development of science, and collaborate with universities in Yugoslavia and abroad. On this occasion, the University of Ljubljana presented the University of Maribor with a golden plaque, symbolizing future cooperation of both universities in academic and research work. Other Rectors and Vice-Rectors present at the ceremony also expressed their support for the new university (Bračič, 1976), presenting commemorative plaques, messages, and gifts to the first Rector (V. V., 1975).



Figure 10: Andrej Marinc Presents the Rector's Chain to Vladimir Bračić

Source: (Cvetnič & Škofič, 1975, p. 12)

On behalf of the City of Maribor, Vitja Rode, President of the Municipal Assembly, presented Vladimir Bračić with the Golden Coat of Arms of the City of Maribor. This honour recognized Bračić's contributions and the role of Maribor's higher education institutions in the city's development. The establishment of the University of Maribor was not only a milestone for higher education institutions but also for the development of the city, the region, and Slovenian academia. The awarding of the city's golden coat of arms to the university was a tribute to all those who contributed to the growth of the Association of Higher Education Institutions in Maribor and the realization of the university's founding vision (Bračić, 1976).

5 In Place of a Conclusion

The University of Maribor is not merely an educational institution – it is the heart of academic, cultural, and social development in the city of Maribor and the broader region. Its establishment was the result of persistent efforts by numerous individuals who recognized the importance of higher education for the future of Maribor and Slovenia. Through its operation, the university not only educated new generations of professionals but connected the city with the scientific world, fostered innovation, and contributed to economic and social progress. Its role has been and remains crucial for the development of the city, the region, and the entire country.

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