



Mednarodna fakulteta  
za družbene in poslovne študije  
International School  
for Social and Business Studies  
Celje • Slovenia • Europe

# **MEDNARODNA FAKULTETA ZA DRUŽBENE IN POSLOVNE ŠTUDIJE (International School for Social and Business Studies)**

## **Self-Evaluation Report**

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

Self-evaluation report prepared by: Research Office

The self-evaluation report was discussed at the Quality and Evaluation Committee meeting on 15 May 2026, at the Research and Doctoral Studies Committee on 18 May 2026, and at the Dean's meeting on 27 May 2026 and was adopted at the 168<sup>th</sup> session of the ISSBS Senate on 27 May 2026.

Celje, May 2026  
No. 10/2026

## INFORMATION ON THE RECIPIENT OF STABLE FUNDING

Name of Research Organisation: Mednarodna fakulteta za družbene in poslovne študije (MFDPSŠ)  
*In English: International School for Social and Business Studies (ISSBS)*

Research Organisation Registration No.: 2711

Website: <https://mfdps.si/>

## Content

|      |                                                                                     |    |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1.   | INTRODUCTION – PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION .....                      | 1  |
| 2.   | PRESENTATION OF THE SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH.....                                   | 3  |
| 3.   | SELF-EVALUATION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.....                                         | 4  |
| 3.1. | Scientific excellence.....                                                          | 4  |
|      | Selected research results demonstrating scientific excellence.....                  | 7  |
| 3.2. | Societal impact .....                                                               | 10 |
|      | Selected cases of societal impact results demonstrating scientific excellence ..... | 10 |
|      | Impact limitations and proposed future directions .....                             | 11 |
| 4.   | QUALITY OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT .....                                 | 12 |
| 4.1. | Strategic management .....                                                          | 12 |
| 4.2. | HR policy, rejuvenation of the research community, PhD training .....               | 15 |
| 4.3. | Research infrastructure and equipment .....                                         | 16 |
| 4.4. | Collaboration, knowledge transfer, and diversity of funding sources .....           | 17 |
| 4.5. | Internal system for ensuring the quality of research.....                           | 19 |
| 4.6. | Open science principles.....                                                        | 20 |
| 4.7. | Principle of equal opportunities.....                                               | 21 |
| 4.8. | Ethics and integrity.....                                                           | 22 |
| 5.   | SUMMARY AND SWOT ANALYSIS.....                                                      | 24 |
| 5.1. | SWOT analysis and overall self-evaluation .....                                     | 24 |

## List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Impact case study: Supporting the systemic and quality-assured development of blended learning in Slovenian higher education

Appendix 2: Impact case study: Strengthening the knowledge base for the development of military education in Slovenia

Appendix 3: Criteria

# 1. INTRODUCTION – PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

The International School for Social and Business Studies (ISSBS; in Slovene: Mednarodna fakulteta za družbene in poslovne študije – MFDPŠ) is a private higher education and research institution based in Celje, Slovenia. Founded in 2006, ISSBS is a specialised institution in the fields of social sciences, business studies, economics, knowledge management, education, organisational sciences, entrepreneurship, and related interdisciplinary areas. The institution currently has approximately 560 students and around 50 academic and administrative staff members. It offers accredited study programmes at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels, including Business in Contemporary Society, Economics in Contemporary Society, Management and Quality in Education, Knowledge Management (Master's programme), and Knowledge Management (PhD programme).

The ISSBS' mission is to enrich the professional development of students and graduates and improve their employability through high-quality, internationally oriented education and research in economics, business and management, thereby contributing to the development of a knowledge society. Its vision is to be recognised as an academically high-quality and socially responsible faculty. The institution's values are responsibility and honesty towards its service users, creativity and innovation in its work, diversity and uniqueness among its members, and integrity and respect in interpersonal relations. These values are reflected in teaching, research, cooperation with stakeholders, quality assurance and institutional governance, and form an important part of the institution's reputation in its academic, professional and wider social environment.

The scientific and research activity of ISSBS is closely connected with its educational mission. Research informs the development of study programmes, teaching content and doctoral education, while the institution's educational profile shapes its thematic research orientation. This creates a coherent research profile focused on applied relevance, interdisciplinary inquiry and cooperation with educational, organisational, business and public-sector environments. Research at ISSBS is therefore understood not only through scientific publications, although these remain essential, but also through contributions to doctoral studies, project-based development, international cooperation, quality improvement, open science, dissemination and societal relevance.

The internal organisation of research at ISSBS is concentrated around the Research Group for Social and Business Studies, academic departments, doctoral studies, project teams, the research office and supporting administrative services. As a small-scale higher education institution, ISSBS operates with a more concentrated research structure than larger universities, which enables relatively direct strategic alignment between research, teaching, projects, quality assurance and institutional development. It also allows responsive decision-making and the formation of agile interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research teams. At the same time, the institution is aware that its research capacity is structurally limited and depends on the expertise, engagement and continuity of a relatively small number of research-active academic staff.

ISSBS is embedded in the Slovenian, European and international research and higher education space through scientific cooperation, project partnerships, academic publishing, international conferences, mobility and participation in European programmes. The institution cooperates with more than 50 partner universities and research organisations worldwide and has extensive experience in Erasmus+, Interreg, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, national R&D projects and other development and research initiatives financed by Slovenian ministries, public agencies and European programmes. It has participated in projects as both coordinator and partner, with thematic emphasis on entrepreneurship, innovation, knowledge management, education quality, digital competences, sustainable development, open science, higher education modernisation and cooperation between academia and practice.

An important element of ISSBS' international academic visibility is the annual international scientific conference MakeLearn, TIIM & PIconf. By 2024, the conference had reached its fourteenth edition and had become an established hybrid international scientific event, co-organised by four higher education institutions. ISSBS students, including doctoral students, have also been involved in the conference

through the presentation of papers and participation in academic exchange. In addition, the institution supports knowledge dissemination through the ISSBS Publishing House and the international academic publisher ToKnowPress, which publishes scientific monographs, conference proceedings and peer-reviewed journals. ISSBS also supports the International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning (IJMKL), whose publication has been continuously co-financed by ARIS and which contributes to the institution's international research and dissemination profile.

A recently adopted ISSBS' Development Strategy 2025–2030 outlines the institution's research priorities and **strategic objectives** of strengthening scientific research activity in a national, European and international context. This includes (i.) ensuring conditions for research, encouraging individual researchers, (ii.) strengthening national and international research cooperation, (iii.) involving students in research, (iv.) integrating scientific results into education, (v.) promoting dissemination and visibility of research outputs, and (vi.) developing a research culture based on cooperation with higher education institutions, research organisations and external stakeholders.

Within the current self-evaluation cycle, ISSBS has achieved stable performance in acquiring projects. Since 2022, the institution recorded 22 successful project applications out of 116 applications (success rate 19 %; results for 26 project applications in 2026 are not yet known). This represents an average of around 25 applications per year and around five to six successful new projects annually. The institution maintained the volume of financed research and development work from stable financing and projects at an approximate five-year average of 4,2 FTE. The structure of Research Group for Social and Business Studies has stabilised at 20 employed researchers.

ISSBS has also strengthened its research-support environment. Measures have included support for individual research work, including co-financing of article processing charges or conference participation, language editing and translation, particularly for publications in internationally recognised journals. The institution established an e-classroom for research and calls to inform members of the research group about project opportunities, organised workshops on writing project applications and created web pages presenting prominent publications by ISSBS researchers. The academic staff also contribute to international scientific communities through editorial roles, including editor-in-chief positions in international scientific journals, memberships in editorial boards and conference boards.

Student involvement in research has been an important part of the institution's development. ISSBS has maintained continuous enrolment in its doctoral study programme and cooperation with foreign higher education teachers, researchers and mentors in doctoral education. It has supported student participation in research projects, scientific conference MakeLearn, TIIM & PIconf, and student conference KoME, organised by the ISSBS Student Council.

Looking forward, ISSBS aims to maintain a credible and recognisable scientific profile while addressing the structural constraints typical of an independent higher education institution. It will seek to increase the quality and international visibility of publications, expand participation in competitive research and development projects, strengthen doctoral research, involve students more systematically in research, and further integrate research results into education and cooperation with the environment. Its research profile is appropriately aligned with education, project activity and cooperation with external stakeholders. At the same time, future development will require careful prioritisation, targeted capacity-building, stronger internal coordination and sustainable support for researchers. The institution's vision is to remain an academically credible and internationally connected higher education and research institution that contributes to knowledge creation, educational innovation, organisational development and the wider knowledge society.

## 2. PRESENTATION OF THE SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

This institutional self-evaluation report focuses specifically on ISSBS' scientific research activities from 2022 onward. However, research at ISSBS cannot be evaluated in isolation from the institution's broader mission as a small-scale private higher education institution, where research activity is connected to education, doctoral studies, project work, the external environment, internationalisation, quality assurance, ethics, open science, and institutional development. The report therefore treats research as a core institutional function that both supports and is supported by teaching, professional engagement and strategic governance.

The self-evaluation uses a balanced evaluative approach and is based on available institutional documents and evidence, since ISSBS makes annual institutional self-evaluations, including the yearly institutional reports with self-evaluation (for years 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025) and annual work plans; the ISSBS' Development Strategy 2025–2030; the institutions' Strategy of Scientific Research Activity 2022–2027; the Implementation Plan for Stable Funding of Scientific Research Activities 2022–2027; the bibliography and citation reports of the Research Group for Social and Business Studies; Internal rules on operation of the ISSBS' Research Ethics Committee and the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Human Participants; the ISSBS' Gender Equality Plan; annual decisions on Funding of Individual Research Work of Higher Education Teachers and Associates; evidence on research and development projects; and evidence on student involvement in research.

The self-evaluation report was compiled and technically concluded by the Research Office under the Associate Dean's coordination. The self-evaluation report was discussed at the Quality and Evaluation Committee meeting on 15 May 2026, which also included a Student Council member. It was then discussed at the Dean's faculty management meeting on 19 May 2026 and at the Research and Doctoral Studies Committee meeting on 18 May 2025, which is led by the head of the doctoral study programme. The report was discussed and adopted at the 168th session of the ISSBS Senate on 27 May 2026, attended by the heads of undergraduate and graduate study programmes and members of the Student Council.

### 3. SELF-EVALUATION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The ISSBS assesses its research activities against the institution's profile, size, and strategic goals. As an independent higher education institution focused on management, education, knowledge, learning, and higher education development, the ISSBS views scientific excellence not only as producing internationally recognised publications but also as developing original and socially meaningful research. This research aims to advance scientific knowledge and support evidence-based progress in education, organisations, and wider society.

The core research framework at ISSBS is closely tied to the implementation of the **research programme Management of Education and Employability in Knowledge Society (P5-0049)**. The research programme focuses on key topics integral to ISSBS's identity, including governance and development of higher education, the link between education and employment, knowledge management, organisational learning, employability, sustainability, digital transformation, and the advancement of the knowledge society. These areas align with the institution's mission to connect research, education, and collaboration with the environment.

#### 3.1. Scientific excellence

The research programme's scientific contribution is demonstrated through the development and empirical testing of models in education and employment management. It draws on perspectives from management, economics, sociology, pedagogy, law, and organisational studies. This interdisciplinary approach enables researchers to examine complex social and institutional issues, including the quality and effectiveness of higher education, graduate employability, labour market transitions, precarious employment, organisational learning, knowledge transfer, and education's contribution to sustainable social development. The programme's key strength is its ability to link theoretical advances with empirical evidence and practical application. Findings have enhanced understanding of how higher education institutions adapt to societal change, how education systems promote employability and lifelong learning, and how organisations and individuals respond to the demands of the knowledge society. Additionally, the programme has supported research on governance, quality, internationalisation, and the development of higher education, aligning with the ISSBS' institutional profile and broader national and European policy discussions.

Scientific excellence is pursued through publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals, scientific monographs, conference proceedings, international co-authorship, participation in research and development projects, and organisation of international scientific events. The institution monitors publication outputs, citations, h-index indicators, international co-authorship, project participation and other indicators of research activity. These indicators are not understood as a substitute for qualitative judgement, but as supporting evidence for assessing the visibility, continuity and development of the research work. At the time of the compilation of this report the ISSBS' programme group consisted of six (6) researchers with the citation metrics as presented in Table 1: Citation metrics for ISSBS' programme group (as of May 2026)

*Table 1: Citation metrics for ISSBS' programme group (as of May 2026)*

| Citation metric                                                                      | Value |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| h-index in the last 10 years (2016–2026)                                             | 20    |
| CI10 – number of pure citations of scientific works in the last 10 years (2016–2026) | 1.330 |
| CImax – most cited work in the last 10 years (2016–2026)                             | 152   |

The Implementation Plan for the Stable Funding of Scientific Research Activities for 2022-2027 sets out measurable objectives and indicators to develop ISSBS' research activities. These indicators are presented and assessed in Chapter 4.1, 'Strategic management'. They include the number of projects

acquired, the share of research and development income in total revenue, participation in international scientific research partnerships, scientific articles co-authored with foreign researchers, involvement of foreign higher education teachers in doctoral studies, partnerships with other research organisations, publications in journals with an impact factor, citation indicators, monographs, and student involvement in research. The use of these indicators supports systematic monitoring of progress and strengthens the link between strategic planning and research performance. However, in the context of scientific excellence, these indicators must be interpreted carefully. On the one hand, some indicators, such as publications in internationally recognised journals, citation impact, international co-authorship and research partnerships, are directly related to scientific quality and visibility. On the other hand, other indicators, such as the number of conference papers, student participation, project income, or dissemination outputs, are important for the broader research environment but do not, by themselves, demonstrate scientific excellence. They are therefore treated as enabling conditions or complementary evidence rather than as direct measures of excellence.

The institution's publication performance indicates that ISSBS has maintained a visible level of scientific output relative to its size. The strategic target of maintaining an average annual number of publications in journals with an impact factor reflects an ambition to preserve and strengthen international research visibility. Monitoring the research group's h-index and citation performance also shows that the institution recognises the importance of research impact within the scientific community. At the same time, this self-evaluation recognises that further qualitative strengthening is needed, particularly by increasing the proportion of publications in higher-ranked journals, encouraging more internationally co-authored articles, and linking project-based research more systematically to high-quality scientific outputs. The publication performance of the ISSBS programme group during the self-evaluation period is presented in Table 2: Publication performance indicators for ISSBS' programme group 2022-2025.

*Table 2: Publication performance indicators for ISSBS' programme group 2022-2025*

| Quantitative Publication Performance Indicators / Numbers by year                   | 2022 | 2023     | 2024     | 2025      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Researchers in the ISSBS' research programme group (P5-0049)                        | 6    | 7        | 9        | 6         |
| Scientific journal papers in journals with impact factor (1A1-1A4) (i.e. Q1-Q4)     | 8    | 6        | 8        | <b>14</b> |
| Scientific journal papers in other journals                                         | 3    | 0        | <b>4</b> | 3         |
| Authored or co-authored scientific monographs                                       | 2    | 1        | <b>4</b> | 1         |
| Authored or co-authored chapters in scientific monographs                           | 0    | <b>6</b> | 0        | 5         |
| Conference papers                                                                   | 2    | <b>9</b> | 5        | 5         |
| (Concluded) mentorships or co-mentorships on 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle study programmes | 12   | 10       | 12       | <b>13</b> |
| (Concluded) mentorships or co-mentorships on PhD study programmes                   | 1    | 0        | 0        | 0         |

The research programme also benefits from the institution's involvement in international projects. Although not all development projects yield original scientific results, they offer opportunities for empirical data collection, comparative analysis, methodological development, co-authorship, doctoral research, policy learning and knowledge transfer. The key challenge for the next period is to ensure that project participation is more consistently translated into scientific publications and other recognised research outputs. This requires earlier planning of publication pathways, clearer allocation of research tasks within projects, and stronger internal support for converting project results into peer-reviewed scientific work.

The self-evaluation also identifies several limitations, listed below, with accompanying proposed institutional responses to these limitations:

1. Research excellence on the institutional level remains concentrated around a relatively limited number of highly active researchers and research lines. Although this is a common risk for smaller institutions, it nevertheless requires strategic attention.

*(Proposed institutional response: Strengthen support for research design, methodology, data management and publication development.)*

2. Although the institution has a broad project portfolio, the conversion of project activity into high-quality scientific publications is not always systematic,

*(Proposed institutional response: Encourage research teams to prepare publication plans at the beginning of larger projects, especially international projects.)*

3. Some indicators in the stable funding plan measure activity or visibility rather than scientific excellence in the strict sense.

*(Proposed institutional response: define a more focused internal publication strategy, with particular attention to internationally indexed journals, journal quality, thematic coherence and responsible research assessment.*

4. The institution should further strengthen internal peer review, methodological support, mentoring and publication planning, particularly for early-career researchers.

*(Proposed institutional response: Complement quantitative indicators with qualitative reflection on originality, methodological rigour, societal relevance and long-term research development.)*

All in all, the ISSBS demonstrates a solid, strategically coherent basis for scientific excellence. The research programme is aligned with the institution's mission and addresses relevant scientific and societal questions in the fields of education, employment, management and the knowledge society. The institution has established measurable objectives and monitoring indicators, maintains international cooperation, supports publication activity and develops a research culture that connects scientific work with education and practice. The main task for the next period is to move from monitoring activity to strengthening demonstrable research quality. For instance, focusing on fewer but stronger strategic priorities, more systematic transformation of project work into scientific outputs, improved methodological and publication support, and clearer qualitative assessment of the originality and contribution of research results.

## Selected research results demonstrating scientific excellence

This report highlights three selected ISSBS research outcomes from this evaluation period to demonstrate scientific excellence. The selection was intended to illustrate the breadth of the institution's research scope rather than to highlight a single focus. The three results cover the sustainable energy transition and technology acceptance; knowledge management, leadership, and organisational performance; and educational innovation, teacher creativity, and digital pedagogical skills. Collectively, they showcase the institution's strategic focus on interdisciplinary, socially impactful, and methodologically sound research in management, education, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

The selected research results aptly represent the institution's interdisciplinary research profile. Taken together, the three outputs demonstrate several dimensions of scientific excellence. They are published in internationally visible peer-reviewed journals, indexed in major bibliographic databases, and supported by early citation evidence.

### 1. Global, regional, and local acceptance of solar power

Publication:

NUORTIMO, Kalle, BREZNIK, Kristijan, HÄRKÖNEN, Janne. Global, regional, and local acceptance of solar power. *Renewable and sustainable energy reviews*. [Online ed.]. Apr. 2024, vol. 193, [article no.] 114296, str. 1-12, illustr. ISSN 1879-0690. [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364032124000194?fr=RR-2&ref=pdf\\_download&rr=849979bb3eefc21e](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364032124000194?fr=RR-2&ref=pdf_download&rr=849979bb3eefc21e), DOI: 10.1016/j.rser.2024.114296. [COBISS.SI-ID 186000131].

**Context:** The journal paper is a highly relevant interdisciplinary contribution at the intersection of sustainable energy research, technology acceptance, artificial intelligence and decision-support analytics. Published in the journal *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, the paper examines the acceptance of solar power at global, regional and local levels. The study is particularly significant because the transition to renewable energy technologies depends not only on technological and economic feasibility, but also on public acceptance, media sentiment and broader socio-economic narratives surrounding energy technologies.

**Originality:** The article's scientific originality lies in its methodological integration of several analytical approaches. The authors combine opinion mining, ChatGPT-based analysis and generalised aggregated lexical tables to examine acceptance and sentiment regarding solar power. The article explicitly states that the study applies these methods to analyse acceptance and sentiment at multiple levels and that its original contribution is to demonstrate the potential of artificial intelligence for studying the general acceptance of solar power. This methodological design goes beyond conventional technology acceptance research by linking computational text analysis, AI-assisted interpretation and contextual techno-economic reasoning.

**Scientific advancement:** The publication enhances understanding of how acceptance of renewable energy technologies can be analysed across various geographical and knowledge domains. Additionally, it demonstrates how AI-assisted methods can quickly gauge media sentiment and levels of acceptance, benefiting researchers, policymakers, and market actors. It also contributes to the broader literature on technology acceptance by distinguishing between sentiment and acceptance, which are related but analytically distinct concepts.

**Scientific excellence rationale:** This result is particularly significant for ISSBS's scientific output, as it demonstrates researchers' ability to engage in globally relevant debates on sustainability, digital analytics, and evidence-based decision-making. It also highlights their capacity to publish in high-impact international journals and to address topics of major scientific and societal relevance. Based on the bibliographic data, the article is indexed in SCIE and Scopus and had already received several citations in WoS and Scopus by 2026, reflecting early international recognition.

### 2. Managing knowledge to improve performance: the impact of leadership style and knowledge management on organizational performance with moderation effects via PLS-SEM

Publication:

NOVAK, Andrej, BREZNIK, Kristijan, NATEK, Srečko. Managing knowledge to improve performance : the impact of leadership style and knowledge management on organizational performance with moderation effects via PLS-SEM. *Journal of the knowledge economy*. Jun. 2023, vol. 14, issue 2, str. 1672-1701, ilustr. ISSN 1868-7873.<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13132-022-00957-4#article-info>, DOI: 10.1007/s13132-022-00957-4. [COBISS.SI-ID 98148611].

**Context:** The paper exemplifies research excellence in ISSBS's core areas: management, leadership, knowledge management, and organisational performance. Published in the *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, a prominent international journal focused on knowledge-based organisations, innovation, leadership, and organisational development, it explores the relationships between leadership styles, knowledge management, and organisational performance. The study also analyses moderation effects within the proposed research framework.

**Originality:** This study holds scientific importance by exploring a key question in management research: how leadership and knowledge management practices impact organisational performance. The authors employ structural equation modelling to analyze data collected from 135 medium and large companies in Slovenia. The abstract highlights that the research investigates the demographic structures of these companies and applies PLS-SEM to validate the proposed relationships. This approach provides the article with a robust empirical and methodological basis.

**Scientific advancement:** The paper makes a dual contribution to knowledge. It first explains how leadership style influences knowledge management, demonstrating a positive link and highlighting the importance of knowledge infrastructure as a key success factor. Then, it provides a detailed interpretation of organisational performance by analyzing the roles of transformational and transactional leadership, while also considering the moderating effects of capital origin and ownership type. Rather than simply testing direct relationships, the article develops a sophisticated model showing how organisational context influences the impact of leadership and knowledge management.

**Scientific excellence rationale:** The paper aligns very well with the ISSBS' scientific identity and research strategy. It highlights ISSBS's longstanding emphasis on knowledge management, leadership, organisational learning, and performance. It also showcases research rigor through a well-defined empirical sample, the application of advanced quantitative models, and systematic testing of relationships among theoretically grounded constructs. Based on the bibliographic data, the article is indexed in SSCI and Scopus, with substantial citation visibility, affirming its significance in the international scholarly community.

### 3. Enhancing teachers' creativity with an innovative training model and knowledge management: a faculty-driven mapping approach

Publication:

SKRBINJEK, Vesna, VIČIČ KRABONJA, Maja, ABERŠEK, Boris, FLOGIE, Andrej. Enhancing teachers' creativity with an innovative training model and knowledge management : a faculty-driven mapping approach. *Education sciences*. 2024, vol.14, issue 12, [art. no.] 1381, str. 1-17, ilustr. ISSN 2227-7102. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/14/12/1381>, DOI:10.3390/educsci14121381. [COBISS.SI-ID 220359427].

**Context:** This paper broadens the evidence of ISSBS's scientific excellence into educational innovation, teacher professional development, and pedagogical digital skills. It effectively connects educational research with knowledge management, fostering creativity and transforming teaching practices. The study presents an innovative teacher training and support model, TTS-IPCD, aimed at boosting teachers' creativity and digital pedagogical competencies.

**Originality:** This paper's scientific merit stems from its effort to develop an empirically based model aimed at fostering teacher creativity in modern learning settings. The research included 350 teachers from 75 primary and secondary schools over four years, offering a solid empirical foundation. Teacher creativity was evaluated using the Kirton Adaption–Innovation Inventory, which measures aspects like problem-solving flexibility, openness to change, and preference for innovative methods.

**Scientific advancement:** The article is relevant as it tackles a key issue in education. i.e. how to support teachers in fostering creativity, pedagogical innovation, and digital skills systematically and sustainably. Instead of viewing teacher creativity as solely an individual trait, it considers it within a wider framework of training, support, knowledge exchange, and organizational learning. This enhances its contribution to research on teacher professional development and educational transformation.

**Scientific excellence rationale:** The scientific excellence rationale highlights ISSBS's research strength in education sciences and its linking of pedagogical innovation with knowledge management. This aligns with strategic goals like digital transformation, lifelong learning, teaching innovation, and developing skills relevant to modern educational systems. According to the bibliographic data, the article is indexed in Scopus and other major databases and had already received a significant number of citations by 2026, showing quick adoption by the academic community.

### 3.2. Societal impact

The ISSBS sees societal impact as the contribution of research-based knowledge to the development of institutions, professional practices, public policies, and education systems. The societal impact of faculty's research is most visible where researchers address issues that are simultaneously academically relevant and institutionally or socially actionable. The research programme P5-0049, in which ISSBS participates as a partner, focuses on results that have a direct impact on the design of more coherent education and employment policies, by addressing the problem of inefficiencies and mismatches between higher education institutions and the labour market.

Rather than producing impact through isolated dissemination activities only, the faculty aspires to contribute to societal relevance by developing research outputs that can be used by higher education institutions, professional organisations, public authorities, quality assurance actors and other stakeholders. To support this claim, this self-evaluation has selected two examples where research relates to blended learning and the digital transformation of higher education, and in research on the development of military education in Slovenia. The two Impact case studies are presented in the following paragraphs in summary, and in the detail in appendices at the end of the document.

#### Selected cases of societal impact results demonstrating scientific excellence

The first selected case is based on the scientific chapter “Normativni okvir kombiniranega izobraževanja” (in English: Normative Framework for Blended Learning) published in the monograph “Razvoj standarda kombiniranega poučevanja v Sloveniji” (in English: The Development of a Standard for Blended Teaching in Slovenia). The case concerns the **normative and quality-assurance framework for blended learning in Slovenian higher education** and is relevant since digital and blended forms of education have become one of the central development challenges of contemporary higher education. The societal value of this research lies not merely in describing digitalisation trends, but in supporting the systematic, quality-assured and institutionally sustainable implementation of blended education. The research addresses questions of accessibility, flexibility, student support, teacher competences, digital infrastructure, academic integrity, internal quality systems and external evaluation. In doing so, it contributes to a broader national discussion on how higher education institutions can modernise teaching and learning without weakening academic standards or institutional responsibility.

The second selected case is based on the scientific monograph “Sistem vojaškega izobraževanja v Sloveniji: strukturne poti, znanstveni temelji in karijerne perspektive” (in English: The System of Military Education in Slovenia: Structural Pathways, Scientific Foundations and Career Perspectives) published by the ISSBS Press in 2025. The case concerns the **development of military education in Slovenia** and demonstrates the capacity of ISSBS research to contribute to a professional field of strategic national importance. Military education is connected with national security, public-sector professionalism, leadership, career development, competence formation and the relationship between specialised professional training and higher education. The societal relevance of this work lies in providing a research-based foundation for reflection on the structure, development and future orientation of military education. It also shows that ISSBS researchers are able to contribute to knowledge transfer beyond the conventional higher education and business environments, including to defence and public-service contexts.

Both selected cases are consistent with the ISSBS' mission, which emphasises the development and transfer of knowledge in areas relevant to organisations and society. The blended learning case is primarily systemic and policy oriented as it supports institutional regulation, quality assurance and educational development. The military education case on the other hand is primarily professional and strategic and as such it supports reflection and development in a specialised public-sector field.

## Impact limitations and proposed future directions

In the self-evaluation period the ISSBS has generated research with societal relevance, especially when research has been embedded in externally funded projects, multi-institutional cooperation or topics with direct institutional users. The strongest impact is visible where research is not limited to academic publication, but also offers frameworks, recommendations, standards, or models that can be used by stakeholders. It can be established that the most potential impact for ISSBS lies in applied social science research that combines conceptual clarity, empirical grounding and practical usability.

When identifying limitations of institutional societal impact from research we can outline the following aspects:

1. Societal impact examples have been generated through individual researchers, projects or publications, while institutional mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evidencing impact remain underdeveloped.
2. On the one hand, bibliographic visibility, open access, participation in projects and professional dissemination are documented relatively well, but direct evidence of use by external stakeholders is less systematically collected.
3. The impact can sometimes be recognised only retrospectively, after publication or project completion, rather than being planned from the beginning of the research process. This reduces the institution's ability to define target users, design appropriate knowledge-transfer pathways and collect evidence of use.

The institution therefore recognises the need to strengthen the strategic management of societal impact. In the next period, ISSBS should more systematically integrate impact planning and encourage researchers to include a short societal-impact plan in new project proposals. Researchers should identify in advance expected users, possible forms of knowledge transfer, intended changes in practice or policy, etc.. This means the institution and project or research groups should make explicit how their research can contribute to institutional development, professional practice, and public debate.

ISSBS should also improve its internal processes for collecting evidence of societal impact. This should be done in cooperation with research and project leaders, principal investigators and lead authors of publications. The data can be collected by a simple internal template for documenting impact evidence during and after project implementation. Relevant evidence may include stakeholder testimonials, references to research in institutional or policy documents, use of research outputs in professional trainings, repository use, implementation of recommendations, etc. Such evidence should be collected continuously, not only during regular self-evaluations. In this process, the role of researchers, research-support staff and institutional leadership and their coordination are very important. Researchers are best placed to identify the relevance and possible users of their work. Support staff can assist with documentation, dissemination, repository records, evidence collection and reporting. Institutional leadership can ensure that societal impact is recognised as part of research strategy, workload planning, project development and quality assurance. Overall, a more inclusive internal reflection process would help the institution identify impact potential earlier and support researchers in translating knowledge into formats useful for external audiences.

## 4. QUALITY OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

### 4.1. Strategic management

The strategic framework for scientific research at ISSBS is outlined by several interconnected documents, including the **Development Strategy 2025–2030**, the **Strategy of Scientific Research Activity 2022–2027**, the **Implementation Plan for Stable Funding of Scientific Research Activities 2022–2027**, and **annual work programmes** along with **self-evaluation reports**. These collectively form the foundation for planning, executing, monitoring, and enhancing research efforts. The Development Strategy 2025–2030 offers the broader institutional context, positioning research as a key component of the institution's overall development, alongside education, internationalisation, environmental cooperation, quality assurance, and sustainability. Consequently, research is integrated as a core activity that helps fulfill the institution's mission, not as a marginal or separate task. The Strategy of Scientific Research Activity 2022–2027 details specific research priorities, development goals, quality standards, publication targets, project development strategies, international cooperation, and support mechanisms for researchers. The Implementation Plan for Stable Funding 2022–2027 is especially crucial as it aims to reduce reliance on short-term project cycles and promote research continuity. For ISSBS, stable funding supports research staff, enhances publication quality and open access, and encourages doctoral and student engagement. Governance of scientific research at ISSBS is managed through formal bodies, strategic documents, internal organisational structures, and annual planning and reporting processes. The governance framework includes the management, academic bodies like the Senate and Academic Assembly, programme and quality assurance structures, research offices, and project teams.

The ISSBS **Research Group for Social and Business Studies** serves as a vital organizational foundation for the institution's scientific activities. It offers a structured framework for registered researchers, research planning, project development, publication efforts, research collaborations, and securing stable research funding. According to national classifications, the group's activities include fields such as 5.02.00 – Social Sciences / Economics, 5.04.00 – Social Sciences / Administrative and Organisational Sciences, and 5.01.00 – Social Sciences / Education. By the end of 2025, the group consisted of 20 researchers and one technical associate. The group's research areas correspond with the faculty's academic disciplines and the expertise of its members. Faculty-led scientific research and development projects are focused on economics, administrative and organizational sciences, and education.

The long-term objectives are based on strategic directions and baselines from previous evaluations, aiming for gradual improvement in ISSBS's research performance from 2022 to 2027. The following sections outline measurable indicators and targets to track progress in research activities, fostering a research and collaboration culture, and promoting research dissemination and student support. For **strengthening the volume of research and development activity** (long-term objective 1), ISSBS emphasises actively applying for and executing projects through national and international calls. The main indicator is the total number of successful project awards, with a 2022 baseline of 2 projects expected to rise to 30 by 2027. During the self-evaluation period, 22 projects were secured. Additionally, the six-year R&D inflow, expressed as an annual average percentage, has a 2022 baseline of 21 %, with a target range of 15 % to 25 % of total revenue. Currently (2022-2025 average), 17 % of income comes from R&D. Participation in international research collaborations is also promoted, measured by the number of partnerships (K), starting from zero and aiming for at least two international projects like Horizon Europe or WEAVE. Currently, ISSBS has no such partnerships. These indicators are detailed in Table 3: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Strengthening the volume of R&D activity«.

Table 3: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Strengthening the volume of R&D activity«

| Long-term objective                                                    | Activity/measure                                                                          | Indicator                                                   | Unit of measurement       | Baseline value 2022 | Current value (May 2026) | Target value 2027 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>1 Strengthening the volume of research and development activity</b> | 1.1 Applying for and implementing projects under various national and international calls | Projects obtained                                           | Total number (cumulative) | 2                   | 22                       | 30                |
|                                                                        |                                                                                           | R&D income / total                                          | Annual average (%)        | 21 %                | 17 % (2022-2025 average) | 15-25 %           |
|                                                                        | 1.2 Participation in international scientific research project partnerships               | Participation in international scientific research projects | Total number (cumulative) | 0                   | 0                        | 2                 |

Aligned with the long-term objective of **developing a culture of research and cooperation with higher education and other institutions** (long-term objective 2), actions are underway to promote co-authorship of scientific articles, involve foreign higher education instructors in doctoral programs, and develop ongoing partnerships within research projects. For measure 2.1, the indicator is the total number of co-authored scientific articles with foreign researchers. The baseline is 9, and the target is at least 50 co-authored papers. The current figure is 13 in 2025. Measure 2.2, focusing on the participation of foreign higher education teachers in doctoral studies, has a baseline of 7 and aims for at least 10. The current count is 12 in 2025. Similarly, measure 2.3, which tracks the formation of partnerships in research programs, has a baseline of 4 with a goal to reach at least 10 partnerships. The current number is already 10 in 2025. All indicators related to the second long-term objective are detailed in Table 4: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Developing a culture of research and cooperation with higher education and other institutions« below.

Table 4: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Developing a culture of research and cooperation with higher education and other institutions«

| Long-term objective                                                                                    | Activity/measure                                                                             | Indicator                                                                                        | Unit of measurement                  | Baseline value 2022 | Current value (May 2026) | Target value 2027     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>2 Developing a culture of research and cooperation with higher education and other institutions</b> | 2.1 Publishing scientific articles in cooperation with foreign researchers                   | Scientific articles (1.01, 1.02, 1.03) by ISSBS researchers co-authored with foreign researchers | Total number (cumulative)            | 9                   | 13 (not cumulative)      | At least 50 in total  |
|                                                                                                        | 2.2 Involvement of foreign higher education teachers in doctoral studies                     | Foreign higher education teachers involved in doctoral studies as mentors or course providers    | Total number of persons (cumulative) | 7                   | 12 (not cumulative)      | At least 10 in total. |
|                                                                                                        | 2.3 Establishing and maintaining partnerships in scientific research programmes and projects | Partnerships in scientific research projects with other research organisations                   | Total number (cumulative)            | 4                   | 10 (not cumulative)      | At least 10 in total  |

**Promoting the dissemination and visibility of research work** (long-term objective 3) involves several measures. For measure 3.1, which includes the international conferences MakeLearn, TIIM & PIconf, the key indicator is the total number of contributions (K), starting from a baseline of 102 with a goal of reaching 700. Current number is 496. Activity 3.2 monitors the number of publications in impact factor journals, with an initial average of 23 publications per year, aiming to maintain or increase this number to at least 20 publications annually. The current value of indicator is 26. The research group's impact is also tracked using the h-index being at the current level of 22. Additionally, Activity 3.3, involving publications through the ISSBS' Press and ToKnowPress, uses the number of monographs published (K) as an indicator; the baseline is 2 and the goal is 12 and the current number of issued monographs is

12. Lastly, activity 3.4 seeks to boost the citation rate of the (IJMKL - International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning), with citations measured via the Harzings Publish and Perish database (K). The baseline is 615 citations, with a target of 800 by the end of 2027. Current citation number is at 1514. Indicators are outlined and assessed in Table 5: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Promoting the dissemination and visibility of research work«.

Table 5: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Promoting the dissemination and visibility of research work«

| Long-term objective                                                  | Activity/measure                                                             | Indicator                                                          | Unit of measurement                                      | Baseline value 2022 | Current value (May 2026) | Target value 2027     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>3 Promoting the dissemination and visibility of research work</b> | 3.1 Organisation of the international MakeLearn, TIIM & PIconf conference    | Total number of contributions                                      | Total number (cumulative)                                | 102                 | 496                      | Total: 700            |
|                                                                      | 3.2 Encouraging the number of publications in journals with an impact factor | Average annual number of publications by Academic Assembly members | Annual average number of publications (A)                | 2022: 23            | 26 (2022-2025 average)   | Average 2022-2027: 20 |
|                                                                      |                                                                              | Increasing the impact of the Research Group                        | h-index of Research Group 2711-001 (group h10 in SICRIS) | 15                  | 22                       | 20                    |
|                                                                      | 3.3 Publishing through ISSBS Publishing House and ToKnowPress                | Monographs published by ISSBS Press and ToKnowPress                | Total number (cumulative)                                | 2                   | 12                       | Total number: 12      |
|                                                                      | 3.4 Improving the citation impact of the IJMKL journal                       | Citations in Harzing's Publish or Perish database                  | Total number (cumulative)                                | 615                 | 1.514                    | 1.800                 |

The last long-term objective is aimed at **creating a supportive environment for developing students' research potential** (long-term objective 4) and is implemented through several measures. Measure 4.1 uses the as an indicator number of students involved in research (K) , with a baseline of 7 and a target of 50 students involved. Current value is 48. Measure 4.2 monitors the number of students attending the student conference KoME, where the baseline is 79 and the target is to increase this number to 400 (cumulative value). Currently the value at this indicator stand at 318. In addition, measure 4.3 monitors the number of scientific articles and conference papers published by students, where the baseline is 13 and the target is to reach at least 80 papers. Current value is 68 papers. All indicators related to the fourth long-term objective are detailed in Table 6: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Creating a supportive environment for developing students' research potential«Table 4: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Developing a culture of research and cooperation with higher education and other institutions«.

Table 6: Assessment of indicators for long-term objective »Creating a supportive environment for developing students' research potential«

| Long-term objective                                                                    | Activity/measure                                | Indicator                                                                                       | Unit of measurement       | Baseline value 2022 | Current value (May 2026) | Target value 2027 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>4 Creating a supportive environment for developing students' research potential</b> | 4.1 Involvement of students in R&D              | Number of students involved in R&D work, e.g. work on an R&D project, thesis, publication, etc. | Total number (cumulative) | 7                   | 48                       | 50                |
|                                                                                        | 4.2 Organisation of the KoME Student Conference | Number of student                                                                               | Total number (cumulative) | 60                  | 318                      | Total: 400        |

|                                       |                                                                                                          |                              |    |    |                     |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----|----|---------------------|
|                                       | participants at<br>the conference                                                                        |                              |    |    |                     |
| 4.3 Encouraging<br>student publishing | Number of<br>scientific articles<br>(1.01, 1.02, 1.03)<br>and conference<br>papers (1.08) by<br>students | Total number<br>(cumulative) | 13 | 68 | Total 80<br>papers. |

Regular monitoring of these indicators allows the ISSBS to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions and adjust its strategy promptly to meet long-term goals. The use of measurable indicators and clear targets supports sustainable and competitive research, boosting the faculty's international visibility, innovation, and financial stability. Concrete initiatives like regular proposal calls, international partnerships, scientific conferences, and student involvement promote holistic development of the research environment. This not only increases the quantity and quality of research projects but also enhances financial sustainability and global recognition. Well-defined operational measures with specific targets and baselines enable ongoing progress tracking and strategic adjustments to evolving research needs.

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system, including annual internal self-assessments, allows continuous refinement of long-term objectives based on results and environment changes. The integrated quality improvement system ensures regular review and adaptation of all measures, fostering transparency and accountability. Annual reports, featuring detailed result analyses, are central to the monitoring process and inform strategic decisions. Frequent meetings and workshops facilitate early detection of deviations and the formulation of corrective actions.

#### 4.2. HR policy, rejuvenation of the research community, PhD training

Sustaining scientific research at ISSBS depends on a limited team of academic and research-active staff who combine research, teaching, mentorship, project work, faculty management, and quality assurance. This integration supports strong links between research, education, and practice but also imposes capacity constraints. The core research capacity is held within the Research Group for Social and Business Studies, which at the end of 2025 comprised 20 registered researchers and one technical staff member. However, the institution recognizes that the main research output is produced by a few highly active researchers. **Addressing workload management, succession planning, and gradually integrating younger researchers (lecturers and assistants)** is essential task for the next period. ISSBS' HR policy for research aims to maintain a balanced mix of experienced and early-career researchers, and support staff. ISSBS cannot rely on extensive departmental structures, therefore its HR approach must be targeted, selective, and pragmatic. The goal is not just numerical growth but the development of a stable research community capable of producing quality publications, securing competitive grants, supervising doctoral students, and translating knowledge into study programmes and practice.

A key strength of the current model is the **direct involvement of academic staff and researchers in various institutional roles** (e.g. faculty management, heads of programmes, members of committees, project leads etc). Research is integrated into teaching, doctoral mentorship, project development, and collaboration with external partners. Project activities offer opportunities for empirical research, international cooperation, and student engagement, creating a strong link between the institution's educational and research missions. However, this model also results in a high workload for staff, who often juggle teaching, mentoring, project execution, reporting and external monitoring, accreditations and evaluations, quality assurance, management, and research publication. This can limit time for consistent scientific writing, developing competitive research proposals, and methodological work. Therefore, ISSBS should **consider workload management as a matter of research quality**, not just administration.

Renewing the research community mainly depends on doctoral education, engaging younger staff in research projects, co-authorship, and conference participation. ISSBS offers doctoral programs in Knowledge Management and involves both **domestic and international higher education teachers**

**and mentors in doctoral studies.** The institution encourages doctoral students to join research projects, publish with mentors, and present at conferences as much as possible, considering their PhD thesis topic, area of research and availability. While support for early-career and younger researchers exists, it should be more systematic. Critical measures include **mentoring by experienced researchers, inclusion in project teams, support for conference participation, publication costs, language editing, methodological advice, and co-authorship opportunities.** For future self-evaluations, besides noting that support was provided the institution should also evaluate whether it leads to higher-quality publications, project engagement, doctoral progress, etc.

In research evaluation, ISSBS still predominantly relies on bibliographic data, publications and citations metrics. In line with European discussions on responsible research assessment, for the future period ISSBS should also recognize originality, methodological rigor, knowledge contribution, open science practices, and research data management. The institutional processes and system are not yet in place to ensure this kind of assessment.

Administrative support staff are vital to the research HR environment as their role include monitoring calls, participating in preparing applications, budgeting, preparing contracts, reporting, financial paperwork, communication with funders, open, and evidence collection. As can often be the case with smaller institutions, a few individuals often handle all these functions. Enhancement of the research office and project support capacity can be identified as one of the important areas for the institutional growth and further development.

#### 4.3. Research infrastructure and equipment

As a higher education institution in social sciences, business studies, and management, the key infrastructure for ISSBS researchers includes access to scientific literature and bibliographic systems (e.g. **Springerlink, ProQuest, Scopus AI**), digital communication tools (**Zoom, Moodle**), statistical, information and publication digital tools (**SPSS, Open Journal System, survey application 1ka, Scite, DeepL**), project management support (**Drive, Trello, otter.ai**) and conference system (**OpenConf.org** hosting, and access to to upload to a trusted repository (**ReVIS**)). Researchers also utilize national research information systems, such as COBISS/SICRIS records, institutional and project websites, and conference proceedings to improve research visibility.

Publication and conference support are essential parts of the research infrastructure, with ISSBS providing internal assistance and co-financing for article processing charges (APC), conference participation, translation, and language editing. These efforts help improve publication reach, and researcher visibility.

Project support is a crucial element of infrastructure. Both international and national projects need expert assistance with proposal writing, budgeting, contracting, execution, reporting, financial oversight, evidence gathering, and communication with funders. At ISSBS, the project portfolio is quite large relative to its size, making project support a strategic concern for research infrastructure. Insufficient administrative support could harm the institution's ability to secure and manage projects and would place more strain on academic staff. Therefore, ISSBS should keep enhancing its internal processes for project development and partner engagement.

A key area for further growth is research data management. Social science research as is the case with ISSBS often includes surveys, interviews, institutional and educational data, student records, organizational case studies, and project evidence. These data need clear procedures for consent, anonymisation, storage, access, documentation, retention, and potential sharing. While ethics procedures have strengthened the responsible research environment, **data management support should be further developed.** Basic templates for data management plans, consent forms, anonymisation methods, secure storage, and access to repositories could greatly improve research quality and adherence to open science standards.

All in all, ISSBS has a functional and appropriate research infrastructure for its size and scope. Important strengths are the institutional project and publication support, research office functions, and international project experience. Key areas for improvement in the next period include better monitoring of support outcomes, enhanced research data management, more systematic open-science guidance, and regular review of software and database access (i.e. improved evidence collection). A good starting point for improvement would be periodic consultations with researchers on their infrastructure and support needs rather than extensive top-down infrastructure expansion.

#### 4.4. Collaboration, knowledge transfer, and diversity of funding sources

ISSBS has built its research reputation through international academic collaborations, projects with international partners and local organizations, and participation in externally funded initiatives. Due to institution size and number of researchers, collaboration is seen not as an extra activity but as essential for maintaining research capacity, broadening expertise, and ensuring the relevance of research to education, policy, and business. During the self-evaluation period, collaboration was particularly prominent in **international capacity-building projects, research and professional networks**, partnerships with foreign higher education institutions, and applied projects involving public bodies, businesses, local groups, and civil society. Internationally, ISSBS remains strongly project-focused, engaging in a diverse array of initiatives, including Erasmus+ Capacity Building, cooperation partnerships, Interreg, and other grants. ISSBS currently implements several international projects which are listed below:

- Supporting European SMEs Improving Onboarding Procedures to Defeat Turnover and Become More Resilient (**ONBOARD**); 1 September 2025–31 August 2027; Erasmus+, KA2: Cooperation Partnerships in Vocational Education and Training (VET).
- Future-ready Industries: Smart, Sustainable, and Circular Resource Management through Industrial Symbiosis (IS) (**FReINDs**); 1 October 2024–30 September 2026; Erasmus+, KA2: Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education.
- HEI GreenPath: Shaping HEI Environment for a Sustainable Tomorrow (**HEI GreenPath**); 1 October 2024–30 September 2026; Erasmus+, KA2: Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education.
- Improving SME Competences in Introducing the Cascade Use Model of Waste Materials through a Cross-border Mentoring Programme (**REUSE**); 1 November 2023–31 October 2026; Interreg Slovenia–Austria Programme 2021–2027.
- Leadership Capacities Development in Higher Education across Albania and Kosovo (**LEADALKO**); 1 December 2024–30 November 2026; Erasmus+, KA2: Capacity Building in Higher Education.
- Towards Open Science Communities Development in Sub-Saharan Africa Region (**OSCAR 2.0**); 1 January 2024–31 December 2026; Erasmus+, KA2: Capacity Building in Higher Education.
- OPEN-ASIA: Boosting Engagement of HEIs in Open Science in India and Malaysia (**OPEN-ASIA**); 1 January 2024–31 December 2026; Erasmus+, KA2: Capacity Building in Higher Education.
- Upscaling Graduates' Employability Tracking through the Implementation of Special Dual Career Paths in Botswana and Eswatini (**UPSCALE**); 1 December 2024–30 November 2027; Erasmus+, KA2: Capacity Building in Higher Education.
- Fostering Digital Transformation of Science in Kenya and Tanzania (**FOSTER**); 1 January 2025–31 December 2027; Erasmus+, KA2: Capacity Building in Higher Education.
- Stimulating Inter-connected, Innovative Teaching and Learning for Enhanced Corporate ESG Performance (**ESG4HE**); 1 September 2025–30 April 2028; Erasmus+, KA2: Cooperation Partnerships in School Education.
- Wellbeing360: Cultivating Sustainable Wellbeing Communities in Higher Education (**Wellbeing360**); 1 December 2025–30 November 2028; Erasmus+, KA2: Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education.

Among these are also some that are specifically directed in developing and promoting open science communities and research in countries outside EU (e.g. OPEN-ASIA, OSCAR 2.0, FOSTER). This demonstrates ISSBS's success in positioning itself as an international partner despite its size, contributing to areas like higher education development, digital transformation, open science, employability, leadership, circular economy, and sustainability. International cooperation has also enhanced its research culture, with joint projects involving comparative research, methodology development, capacity-building, training materials, institutional analysis, policy outputs, and dissemination activities. These efforts not only support project results but also build institutional knowledge on research management, international collaboration, intercultural academic work, and

socially relevant research outputs. A notable strength is that many international projects align closely with ISSBS' educational and research focus. More on past and concluded international project at link <https://mfdps.si/mednarodni-projekti/>.

ISSBS partners with Slovenian institutions and research organizations as these collaborations are vital, ensuring that the institution's research aligns with national development goals and societal needs. Examples include past joint projects in education, entrepreneurship and digital skills. ISSBS also contributes to the national research and higher education landscape through expert input, evaluation participation, quality assurance, project collaborations, and conferences. Locally, ISSBS benefits from its presence in Celje and the surrounding region. Collaborations with local organizations, schools, companies, and public institutions enable research that addresses specific social, educational, and economic challenges. This is particularly evident in **applied student projects, partnerships with businesses and public bodies**, and initiatives where students, staff, and external partners work together on practical issues (e.g. in 2026 the project "Problem-Based Learning of ISSBS Students through the Design of Sustainable Solutions in Tourism, Industry and Culture" financed by the Ministry of Higher Education and from European Social Fund+). Such cooperation increases research relevance and helps the institution support regional development.

Beyond conventional research, ISSBS has expanded its partnerships to include higher education, public agencies, NGOs, businesses, and professional groups, often through externally funded projects. This **fosters transdisciplinary and practice-based knowledge**. In projects from areas like the circular economy, sustainability, open science, employability, and digital transformation, stakeholders are actively involved not only in using results but also in shaping needs, testing solutions, training, validating outputs, and sharing knowledge. This approach ensures effective **knowledge transfer during projects**, not just after research ends. Knowledge transfer primarily takes place through project activities, training, dissemination events, policy-oriented outputs, open educational resources, publications, conferences, stakeholder workshops, and collaboration with knowledge users.

The research/project office, faculty management, project managers, and individual researchers facilitate knowledge transfer. This decentralized method supports the institution's focus on social sciences and higher education, although formal processes could improve consistency, oversight, and visibility. In international projects, elements such as **social relevance, stakeholder engagement, dissemination, exploitation, sustainability, and transferability are increasingly integrated into the initial project design**. This is especially evident in Erasmus+ and Interreg projects, where expected results, target groups, dissemination strategies, policy relevance, training, and sustainability measures are defined upfront. Consequently, ISSBS has gained **experience in planning impact pathways, identifying target groups, developing communication strategies**, and aligning project outputs with institutional and societal needs. This expertise should be more systematically applied in planning scientific research, including ARIS-funded activities and individual publication strategies.

The self-evaluation also points out areas for growth. Collaboration is strong but mainly depends on a limited group of experienced researchers and project leaders, risking over-concentration of knowledge, networks, and proposal-writing capacity. The institution should also bolster internal mechanisms to **promote cross-disciplinary and career-stage connections**, encouraging early-career researchers to join consortia, co-author publications, and participate in stakeholder-focused research. Knowledge transfer documentation should become more systematic, capturing evidence of stakeholder engagement, policy influence, training outcomes, implementation of outputs, and long-term institutional or societal changes. Regarding funding, ISSBS combines stable funding of research with national and international grants, and market-oriented activities such as conferences. Its international project portfolio shows the ability to attract funds beyond core financing, particularly from Erasmus+ and European programs.

External project funding is crucial for ISSBS, enabling internationalization, collaboration, new expertise, staff and student involvement, dissemination, and visibility. However, risks exist: European funding is highly competitive, complex, and often unstable. While it supports development, it may not directly finance high-quality publications. Therefore, ISSBS should **diversify its funding sources further** and ensure that externally funded projects are systematically connected to research outputs, publications, doctoral training, and long-term research objectives.

The ISSBS has successfully obtained international project funding. However, further improvement is needed to better **balance project-based activities with sustained scientific productivity and stable research capacity**. Institutional support for securing external funds plays a crucial role. ISSBS offers assistance through research office, which helps researchers with calls, partner communication, proposal drafting, budgeting, administrative tasks, contractual matters, reporting, and dissemination. This support is especially vital because academic staff at smaller institutions cannot handle the full administrative complexity of European projects alone. Therefore, the institution should continue strengthening professional support for project acquisition and execution, including refining internal procedures for project selection, budgeting, workload management, risk control, compliance, and post-project results exploitation.

ISSBS' key strengths include active participation in international projects, applied cooperation with external stakeholders, openness to interdisciplinary topics, and experience in development-focused knowledge transfer. Areas for improvement include more systematic internal coordination, greater involvement of early-career researchers, better documentation of societal impact, clearer links between project work and scientific outputs, and more precise monitoring of external funding structures and sustainability.

Events such as the **annual MakeLearn, TIIM & PIconf International Scientific Conference**, which gather academics, researchers, and experts from various countries, are vital for international engagement. They **promote knowledge transfer**, research network development, and dissemination of scientific findings. Publishing in reputable international journals with impact factors and producing monographs with renowned publishers are also essential, increasing the research team's international reputation. Higher education teachers and associates at ISSBS also serve on the **editorial boards of several international scientific journals, with some holding editor-in-chief positions in Scopus- or SCI-indexed journals**. This demonstrates the faculty's active integration into the international scientific community and contributes to the visibility and impact of its research work. Key editorial roles include editor-in-chief or editor positions in the following WoS and/or Scopus-indexed journals:

- Human Systems Management; Editor-in-Chief since 2019; Impact Factor: 1.4; CiteScore: 2.6.
- International Journal of Management in Education; Editor-in-Chief since 2007 and Editor since 2015; Impact Factor: 0.51; CiteScore: 2.0.

ISSBS staff also hold editor-in-chief roles in other international scientific and professional journals, including journals connected with ISSBS:

- International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning; Editor-in-Chief since 2015.
- International Journal of Diplomacy and Economy; Editor-in-Chief since 2012.
- Izzivi managementu; Editor-in-Chief since 2015.

In addition, ISSBS higher education teachers and associates are members of editorial boards or editors of a broad range of international journals, including Electronic Government: An International Journal, Expert Systems with Applications, Frontiers in Education, Industrial Management & Data Systems, International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business, International Journal of Innovation and Learning, International Journal of Mobile Communications, Journal of Computer Information Systems, Journal of Food Products Marketing, SAGE Open, Tourism and Hospitality Management, and World Transactions on Engineering and Technology Education, among others.

#### 4.5. Internal system for ensuring the quality of research

At ISSBS, the internal research quality assurance system is integrated with the overall **institutional quality assurance system** established and supported by the ISSBS' **Quality Manual**. The document is based on relevant national and European quality and research frameworks, including the Higher Education Act, the Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes, the Criteria for International Cooperation in Higher Education, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the European Charter for Researchers, the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity. Research quality is managed through strategic planning, annual

reports, self-assessment, and monitoring of publications and citations. The institution has recently implemented several internal policies and procedures to promote research quality, including rules related to research ethics, academic integrity, and relevant committees. During the evaluation period, emphasis was placed on developing internal frameworks for research ethics and responsible conduct, such as the functioning of the Research Ethics Committee and the adoption of rules for ethical research involving people.

The main bodies responsible for research quality include the Senate, the **Committee for Research and Doctoral Study**, the **Quality and Evaluation Commission**, the **Research Ethics Committee**, and **Academic Appointments Committee**. The Senate holds the ultimate institutional responsibility for adopting key policy documents and strategic decisions. The Committee for Research and Doctoral Study aids in planning and monitoring research activities and the implementation of the doctoral programme, while the Quality and Evaluation Commission works to integrate research quality within the broader institutional quality framework. The Research Ethics Committee plays a vital role in upholding ethical standards and research integrity. However, the internal system for maintaining research quality is still evolving. Some components are well-established, such as annual reporting, projects' documentation, monitoring of bibliographic indexes, citations and outputs, and journal metrics. Others need further development, particularly structured mentoring for early-career researchers, strategic monitoring of publication quality, follow-up on societal impact, and regularly utilizing self-evaluation findings to implement improvements. The institution should therefore transition from a primarily reporting-based approach to a more developmental model of research quality assurance.

Developmental direction for quality of research could be the **expansion of internal standards and indicators** to include open access metrics, FAIR data practices, engagement of early-career researchers, interdisciplinary work, stakeholder involvement, societal impact, and ethical approvals. Additionally, **early-career researcher participation** is especially crucial for fostering research culture, succession planning, and skills development. This can be facilitated through targeted mentoring, involvement in project teams, seminars, co-authorships, workshops, and appropriate committee memberships. The key challenge is not the lack of quality mechanisms but the need for systematic integration into a continuous cycle of planning (Plan), action (Do), monitoring and evaluation (Check), improvement and learning (Act). The process of institutional quality assurance system and the continuous improvement of quality systems and processes is shown on Figure 1: Process of Updating the Quality System at ISSBS below.

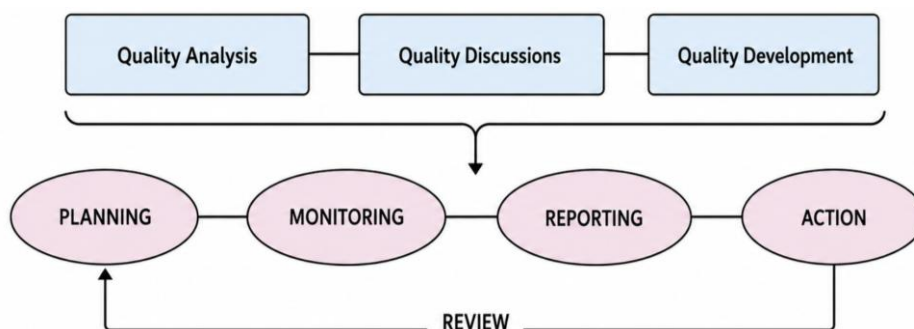


Figure 1: Process of Updating the Quality System at ISSBS

#### 4.6. Open science principles

ISSBS views open science as a vital aspect of responsible, transparent, and socially impactful research. Its activities align with national laws, the European Research Area principles, and Slovenia's open science framework. During the review period, ISSBS enhanced its commitment to open science mainly through international projects, open access publications and assistance with open access publication. Several ongoing ISSBS' international projects directly relate to open science and the digital transformation of research, focusing on open science communities (e.g. OPEN-ASIA, OSCAR 2.0, FOSTER). These projects have equipped ISSBS with valuable knowledge and practical resources for internal growth.

Open access publishing is already an integral part of ISSBS research practices. Researchers publish in open access journals, utilize institutional and national bibliographic systems, and make selected outputs

available through databases, repositories, and conference proceedings. ISSBS supports publication costs when appropriate, including those for open access, by annual **Funding of Individual Research Work of Higher Education Teachers and Associates for the Calendar Year**. This increases the visibility and accessibility of research results. However, the institution should more systematically monitor open access activities. Future annual reports should include a simple overview of open access publications, repository deposits, open monographs, conference proceedings, and other publicly available outputs. Research data management is less developed and requires more emphasis in the future. For now, the ISSBS' **open-access international scientific journal** "International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning" (IJMKL) has developed and published **Research Data Retention and Availability Policy** and **Policy on Requiring Citation of Research Data and Other Research Outputs in References** (<https://toknowpress.net/submission/index.php/ijmkl/about/submissions>). It should also be noted that not all research data can be openly shared, especially when containing personal, sensitive, institutional, or commercially relevant information (for example data or output for the Ministry of Defence and Slovenian students' enrolment data from the Ministry of Higher Education as was a case in recent years). Nonetheless, researchers should document datasets, store them securely, specify access conditions, and include relevant metadata. When open sharing isn't feasible, restricted access, anonymized summaries, and detailed methodological documentation can still support open science principles.

Open science also includes transparent and responsible research communication. ISSBS shares research via scientific publications, monographs, the MakeLearn, TIIM & PIconf international conferences by conference proceedings, project websites, and student conferences. Open educational resources are also significant as **ISSBS participates in many projects creating open-access training materials, tools, learning resources, guidelines, and capacity-building assets**, many aimed at students, educators, institutions or businesses. Further steps in this area would be the **development of an internal open science guide with annual reviews covering publications, data, and open educational resources**.

Open science should be incorporated into doctoral study as students need guidance on open access publishing, responsible repository use, data management, and research ethics. ISSBS can **leverage its experience with open science projects to develop targeted training sessions or guidance materials for PhD students**. Also, practices like open science, data quality and transparency, reproducibility, and other contributions to shared resources should be recognized as part of research performance. This aligns with European trends in research evaluation.

#### 4.7. Principle of equal opportunities

ISSBS recognises equal opportunities and equal treatment as essential principles of a fair, inclusive and high-quality academic and research environment. A key development in the reporting period was the preparation and adoption of the ISSBS' **Gender Equality Plan** as a dimension of institutional quality, responsible governance, research integrity and academic culture. The document was discussed within the wider institutional framework involving management, academic staff, professional services and students, i.e. in the first half of 2025 at the Dean's meeting, the Dean's advisory board, the Student Affairs Committee and the ISSBS' Student Council. It was adopted by the ISSBS' Senate on 18 June 2025 and is published on the faculty website among institutional regulations and documents.

The Gender Equality Plan provides a basis for analysing the current situation, defining objectives and planning measures for a fair, safe and inclusive academic environment. Its central focus is gender equality, but it also addresses wider dimensions of diversity and personal circumstances, including sexual orientation, parenthood and other circumstances that may affect equal opportunities. The plan applies to educational, research, employment and governance processes and is intended for all key stakeholders: management, academic and administrative staff, and students. It emphasises the responsibility of all members of the academic community to recognise, prevent and eliminate discrimination, harassment, stereotypes and barriers to equal treatment.

The adoption of the plan can be assessed as an important step in the formalisation of equal opportunities policy at ISSBS and provides a clear basis for internal dialogue, monitoring and improvement. At the same time, the main challenge for the next period is the transition from adoption of strategic documents

to its consistent implementation and monitoring. The institution should therefore further clarify operational responsibility for the implementation of Gender Equality Plan, collecting relevant information, proposing updates and reporting on implementation. Human resource support for equal opportunities is provided through the management structure, administrative support services, institutional committees and members of the student council. In the next period, this distributed responsibility should be complemented by regular monitoring, concise annual reporting and clearer follow-up of measures. A possible solution would be to appoint a responsible person or working group for equal opportunities within the faculty.

ISSBS should also connect equal opportunities with doctoral studies, researcher development, open science, data protection and project work. Doctoral students and early-career researchers often need clear guidance on research ethics and equal opportunities, data collection, consent, data storage, authorship, publication ethics and the responsible use of artificial intelligence and digital tools. These elements support both research quality and a fair academic culture based on accountability, transparency and respect.

In the current state the area of equal opportunities and its governance is described in the annual report and yearly self-evaluation. The actionable priority for the next period would be regular review of the plan, clear responsibility for its coordination, integration of equality considerations into management processes, active support for researchers and doctoral students, and concise annual reporting on implemented measures, challenges and planned improvements.

#### 4.8. Ethics and integrity

ISSBS has previous experience with structured research environment standards. In 2012–2015, the faculty held the European HR Excellence in Research Award – HRS4R. Although the renewal was not carried out later, ISSBS continues to follow the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, especially in relation to fair treatment of researchers, transparent procedures, career development and research conditions. At the strategic level, ISSBS follows the Resolution on the Slovenian Scientific Research and Innovation Strategy 2030, and also the principles of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and in the recommendations of the National Council for Ethics and Integrity in Science. The **ISSBS' Development Strategy 2025–2030** includes, among the strategic orientations in research and development, the development of a culture of research and cooperation with higher education and other institutions. This orientation also includes strengthening ethics and integrity in scientific research.

A major institutional step was made in 2025. With the amendment of the ISSBS Statute, the **Research Ethics Committee** was introduced. In the same year, ISSBS prepared and adopted the **Rules on the Operation of the Research Ethics Committee** and the **Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans**. Both were adopted by the ISSBS Senate at its 165th session on 26 November 2025. This established a formal mechanism for ethical review of research involving human participants or sensitive data. The system is new and its effectiveness has yet to be demonstrated through regular use. ISSBS therefore needs to ensure that researchers, doctoral students and project teams know when ethical approval is required, which procedures apply and which forms or guidance documents must be used.

Furthermore, research integrity at ISSBS is understood more broadly than just ethical approval. It also includes reliable research design, appropriate methodology, accurate data collection and analysis, transparent reporting, responsible authorship, correct use of affiliations, proper citation, prevention of plagiarism and duplicate publication, protection of intellectual work, disclosure of conflicts of interest and responsible use of artificial intelligence and digital tools. These standards are also relevant for externally funded projects, where ethical requirements must be aligned with funder rules and data protection obligations. In the next period the ISSBS should support researchers, especially doctoral students and young PhDs, with clear guidance and/or additional trainings on ethical approval, consent, data storage, authorship, publication ethics and responsible use of AI-supported tools. ISSBS should also continue encouraging researchers to publish with trustworthy publishers and journals and to avoid questionable or predatory publishing practices. Internal guidance from the faculty management and

support offices should address responsible authorship, plagiarism prevention, duplicate publication, correct citation, disclosure of conflicts of interest and accurate reporting of research results.

As the ethics and integrity system is an important aspect of the research, it should remain proportionate to the faculty size. This means procedures should not create unnecessary administrative burden, but should be clear, accessible, documented and consistently applied. A practical next step is to include a chapter on research ethics and integrity in the yearly reports and self-evaluation, including the number of applications reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee, types of research assessed, and guidance activities and proposed improvements.

## 5. SUMMARY AND SWOT ANALYSIS

This institutional self-evaluation shows that ISSBS has a functioning and strategically relevant scientific research activity that is proportionate to its size and institutional mission. The institution's research profile is concentrated in fields aligned with its study programmes, staff expertise, project work and cooperation with the environment. This provides a coherent basis for future development.

The evaluated period has been marked by important institutional developments: the use of stable research funding, the presence of research strategy and implementation planning, active project participation, international cooperation, support for researchers, documentation of student involvement, participation in open science projects and the formalisation of research ethics governance. These developments show progress toward a more structured research environment.

At the same time, the self-evaluation identifies clear limitations. Research capacity is constrained by institutional size and workload structure. Research activity remains partly dependent on project funding and individual initiative. Some governance and support mechanisms require further systematisation. Evidence on research impact, student involvement, open science practices and equality-related implementation should be collected and interpreted more systematically.

The central development task for the next period is consolidation. ISSBS should strengthen a focused research profile, improve annual monitoring, use stable funding strategically, support research-active staff, develop responsible research practices, connect projects with scientific outputs, and document the contribution of research to education and society. These steps are realistic, proportionate and aligned with the institution's mission. The institution's strengths lie in mission alignment, project-based cooperation, international networks, applied relevance and growing attention to responsible research. Its improvement needs relate mainly to capacity, evidence, operationalisation and systematic follow-up. Addressing these needs will support stronger research quality, clearer institutional visibility and more sustainable research development in the next period.

The faculty currently fulfils 2 out of 3 criteria for stable financing from 2028 onwards (see Appendix 3). The efforts for fulfilling the 3rd criteria is ongoing.

### 5.1. SWOT analysis and overall self-evaluation

The SWOT analysis in Table 7: SWOT analysis of ISSBS' research activity considers the institution's strategic documents, annual reports, project activity, research outputs, citation evidence, open science engagement, ethics governance, gender equality framework and internal support mechanisms. It shows that ISSBS has a credible and mission-aligned basis for scientific research activity. Its main strengths are proportionate to the institution profile and are especially strategic coherence, project activity, international cooperation, internal support for researchers, emerging responsible research practices and a close connection between research and education. The main weaknesses relate to limited research capacity, dependence on a relatively small number of research-active individuals, insufficiently systematic evidence management, and the need to more consistently document student involvement, societal impact, open science practices, ethics implementation and gender equality indicators.

The most important opportunities lie in use of stable research funding, open science experience, international partnerships and doctoral education, which can all to strengthen a more focused research profile. Institution should prioritise a limited number of research clusters, support high-quality publications, and connect projects more directly with scientific outputs. The main risks are dependence on project cycles, administrative overload, thematic fragmentation, limited staff capacity and insufficient documentation of achievements. These risks can be mitigated by clearer strategic prioritisation, stronger evidence management, targeted support for research-active staff, systematic involvement of students and doctoral candidates, and annual review of implementation measures.

Table 7: SWOT analysis of ISSBS' research activity

| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coherent research profile aligned with the institution's educational mission and study areas, especially economics, management, organisational sciences, and education.</li> <li>- Existence of a dedicated Strategy of Scientific Research Activity 2022–2027 and an Implementation Plan for Stable Funding of Scientific Research Activities 2022–2027.</li> <li>- Research activity is connected with teaching, doctoral studies, project work, cooperation with the environment and institutional development.</li> <li>- Stable research funding provides a basis for more continuous research planning and support beyond individual project cycles.</li> <li>- Active participation in national and international projects, including several international projects related to open science.</li> <li>- Internal support for researchers through reimbursement of publication and conference costs.</li> <li>- Student involvement in research is documented in annual reports and can be connected with thesis work, projects and doctoral education.</li> <li>- Recent formalisation of research ethics governance strengthens the responsible research environment.</li> <li>- Gender Equality Plan provides a formal basis for inclusive research governance and equal opportunities.</li> <li>- Project and research-office support functions contribute to administrative and organisational sustainability of research.</li> <li>- Strong potential for societal relevance through applied research, project cooperation, and regional engagement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited research capacity due to institution's size and the multiple roles of academic staff in teaching, mentorship, project work, and governance.</li> <li>- Research activity concentrated among a relatively small number of research-active staff.</li> <li>- The link between strategic objectives, indicators, resources and follow-up measures is not yet sufficiently operationalised in all areas.</li> <li>- Dependence on externally funded projects can lead to discontinuity, administrative burden and potential thematic fragmentation.</li> <li>- Project outputs are not always systematically translated into scientific publications or doctoral topics.</li> <li>- Bibliometric and citation data require more systematic longitudinal interpretation and field-sensitive contextualisation.</li> <li>- Research ethics procedures are still developing and require consistent implementation, annual reporting and integration with doctoral studies and project work.</li> <li>- Gender equality and inclusion indicators in research activity need more systematic monitoring and interpretation.</li> <li>- Societal impact is not yet documented through a systematic evidence framework distinguishing cooperation, dissemination and actual uptake or change.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Threats / Risks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of stable research funding to consolidate priority research fields, strengthen publication quality.</li> <li>- Develop 3–5 recognisable institutional research clusters linked to staff expertise, doctoral topics, publications and projects.</li> <li>- Use open science projects as a basis for internal policies, guidance, training, data-management templates and responsible research practices.</li> <li>- Strengthen international partnerships into long-term research cooperation, joint publications, doctoral collaboration and future projects.</li> <li>- Improve the systematic inclusion of master's and doctoral students in research, including thesis alignment, project participation.</li> <li>- Improve digital visibility through consistent institutional affiliation, researcher profiles, ORCID use, and open access dissemination.</li> <li>- Build a simple annual research dashboard linking strategy, indicators, outputs, projects, student involvement, ethics, open science and societal relevance.</li> <li>- Strengthen publication strategy by supporting selected high-quality outputs and linking project results to scientific articles.</li> <li>- Use project/research office experience to professionalise project development and improve application success.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued dependence on project-based funding may make research development vulnerable to fluctuations in calls, success rates and partner opportunities.</li> <li>- Excessive thematic dispersion may weaken the institution's research identity and reduce cumulative scientific visibility.</li> <li>- International partnerships may remain project-limited and not develop into sustained scientific collaboration.</li> <li>- Weak integration of students into research may reduce the institution's research culture and limit the developmental role of doctoral studies.</li> <li>- Limited international visibility may persist if dissemination and affiliation practices remain inconsistent.</li> <li>- Insufficient evidence management may lead to underrepresentation of actual achievements in evaluations, accreditations and funding applications.</li> <li>- Administrative and teaching workloads may reduce time available for high-quality scientific writing and preparation of projects.</li> <li>- Inconsistent ethics procedures may create reputational, legal or quality risks.</li> <li>- Equality and inclusion measures may remain formal rather than evidence-based if not linked with monitoring and follow-up.</li> <li>- The institution may fail to demonstrate societal relevance if evidence of impact remains fragmented across project reports, annual reports and informal records.</li> <li>- Administrative overload and limited professional support may constrain the institution's ability to prepare competitive applications and manage funded projects effectively.</li> </ul> |

## 6. APPENDICES

### 6.1. Appendix 1: Impact case study: Supporting the systemic and quality-assured development of blended learning in Slovenian higher education

| Impact case study report                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Research basis:</b></p> <p>The societal impact is derived from the chapter “Normativni okvir kombiniranega izobraževanja” [in English: Normative Framework for Blended Learning]. It is published in the monograph <i>Razvoj standarda kombiniranega poučevanja v Sloveniji</i> [in English: Development of a Standard for Blended Teaching in Slovenia]. The chapter examines the normative framework for adopting blended learning in Slovenian higher education. It discusses legislation, strategic documents, and regulations related to the Higher Education Act and standards, highlighting that current regulations do not fully accommodate modern educational methods like blended learning. The authors argue that clearer standards for minimum requirements, implementation quality, and digital support are necessary. This chapter is part of a broader monograph that includes topics such as the future of higher education in the digital age, a template for a blended education standard, implementation recommendations, and the normative framework for blended learning. The research is a comprehensive, applied effort addressing the institutional, normative, and quality assurance conditions for the systematic development of blended learning in Slovenia.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Impact description:</b></p> <p>This chapter's societal contribution is in establishing a clearer, quality-focused framework for blended learning in Slovenian higher education. It is significant because blended learning influences accessibility, flexibility, inclusion, digital transformation, student support, and overall study quality. The chapter translates research, comparative reviews, and policy analysis into practical guidance for higher education institutions, policymakers, and quality assurance bodies. It reviews European and Slovenian policy documents, identifies gaps in the existing regulations, and suggests directions for institutional oversight of blended education. Key audiences include HEIs, management, quality assurance offices, programme leaders, teachers, support services, digital learning units, policymakers, and evaluators. The chapter also relates to the national quality assurance system, especially regarding accreditation, evaluation, and enhancement of programmes involving blended, hybrid, or digital teaching. Knowledge transfer occurs through open publication, inclusion in national bibliographic and repository systems. It offers tangible guidance, such as a proposed structure for an internal institutional act on blended learning, covering definitions, digital infrastructure, professional development, privacy, programme design, student support, assessment, quality assurance, and financing. The primary benefit is supporting a transition from ad hoc digitalization to planned, regulated, and quality-assured blended learning. It emphasizes that flexibility and digital delivery must be underpinned by standards, responsibilities, teacher skills, student services, infrastructure, and systematic evaluation. The chapter links Slovenian higher education development to European priorities and international discussions on quality assurance. The connection between research and impact is direct. Currently, Slovenian higher education lacks clear internal and external quality assurance frameworks for blended and distance learning. The chapter addresses this by identifying regulatory gaps, synthesizing evidence, and proposing quality assurance guidelines for institutions and external evaluators, including questions based on developed standards. As it is recent, the impact is still emerging but holds strong potential for influence through institutional policies, quality manuals, teacher training, self-evaluation, digital education strategies, and national policy debates on blended learning regulation.</p> |
| <p><b>Evidence and possible resonance:</b></p> <p>chapter was published by the University of Maribor Press in the 2025 monograph <i>Razvoj standarda kombiniranega poučevanja v Sloveniji</i>. The monograph is also available through dLib.si as a mandatory deposit of an online publication. The chapter is indexed in the Digital Library of the University of Maribor and it</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

provides public repository visibility indicators, including downloads. The broader project context is externally documented. The chapter and monograph are also visible in national research and bibliographic infrastructures, including COBISS, SICRIS/OpenScience and ORCID-linked records. SICRIS records it as an independent scientific contribution or chapter in a monographic publication, while OpenScience records it with keywords such as normative framework, higher education legislation, blended education, quality of education and legal basis. The case could be further strengthened with use of the chapter or project results in institutional acts on blended learning, presentations to NAKVIS or ministries, use in teacher training, references in digital education strategies, citation in accreditation or self-evaluation documents, testimonials from partner institutions, or documented use of the proposed evaluator questions in internal or external quality assurance.

## 6.2. Appendix 2: Impact case study: Strengthening the knowledge base for the development of military education in Slovenia

### Impact case study report

#### Research basis:

The societal impact is derived from the scientific monograph *Sistem vojaškega izobraževanja v Sloveniji: strukturne poti, znanstveni temelji in karijerne perspektive* [in English: *The System of Military Education in Slovenia: Structural Pathways, Scientific Foundations and Career Perspectives*], published by ISSBS Press in 2025. The digital version is openly accessible through dLib.si, with DOI 10.53615/978-961-6813-56-3, COBISS-ID 246673923. The monograph offers a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of Slovenian military education, integrating historical, organizational, pedagogical, professional, and strategic viewpoints. It examines the evolution of Slovenia's military education system, its institutional framework, scientific base, connections to higher education, competence models, modular approaches, and career pathways within the Slovenian Armed Forces. Its research aligns with ISSBS's broader interests in management, knowledge, learning, education, institutional growth, and public-sector capacity building, illustrating the institution's capacity to tackle societal issues through academically sound, practice-oriented research.

#### Impact description:

The societal impact of the monograph lies in its contribution to the understanding of military education in Slovenia across various sectors. It highlights that military education extends beyond the defense sector to encompass national security, public service professionalism, strategic skills, civil-military knowledge exchange, lifelong learning, and integration into broader educational and research systems. The monograph combines scattered knowledge into a comprehensive scientific and professional reference, providing stakeholders with a structured overview of its history, current institutions, scientific basis, and future challenges. This facilitates better discussion among defence professionals, educational institutions, researchers, policymakers, and other involved parties. Knowledge is shared through publications, open access, and visibility in defense-related channels. Main audiences include the Slovenian Armed Forces, defence education and training bodies, policymakers, higher education institutions, military studies researchers, and individuals interested in defence careers. The societal benefits are threefold: it strengthens the evidence for future military education development, promotes professionalism through linking education with competence-based learning and career pathways, and enhances understanding of military education's role in long-term defence readiness. The connection between research and impact is direct as the monograph offers a consolidated academic reference and serves as a practical resource for strategic and professional growth. While remaining a recent publication, its impact is emerging and credible, with future potential to influence programme design, competence frameworks, career models, institutional cooperation, and further military research.

#### Evidence and possible resonance:

The monograph is listed in national bibliographic and repository systems, affirming its status, accessibility, and dissemination beyond ISSBS. COBISS categorizes it as a scientific monograph in the areas of the Slovenian Armed Forces, education, military education, and military training. Additionally, the monograph has gained recognition in the professional defence magazine *Slovenska vojska*, which featured it in October 2025 as a comprehensive overview of military education from the Austro-Hungarian era through Yugoslavia to today's Slovenian Armed Forces. The review emphasized its focus on competence models, modular education, integration of military education into higher education, and its significance for national security, defence policy, military effectiveness, and readiness for international operations. This external acknowledgment demonstrates that the publication has reached the most relevant professional community. Its registration in dLib.si, COBISS, and ReVIS repository ensures traceable dissemination and facilitates access for researchers, students, military professionals, and the interested public. This supports further use in teaching, research, policy development, and professional training.

### 6.3. Appendix 3: Criteria

| <b>Criterion for stable financing of research</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Status at ISSBS</b> | <b>Explanation / Current Situation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Condition 1 – Employment of researchers amounting to 30 FTE dedicated to scientific research activities within the last eight completed calendar years.</b>                                                                                                                                                                              | Fulfilled              | According to ARIS records, MFDPS currently meets the requirement of 30 FTE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Condition 2 - During this period, allocation of at least EUR 500,000 in funding for scientific research activities.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Fulfilled              | MFDPS fulfils this requirement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Condition 3 – At least two contracts for research and/or innovation projects under the EU Framework Programme for Research, Development and Innovation, or projects resulting from partnership projects within the EU Framework Programme, or at least one contract for a Centre of Excellence funded through central EU programmes.</b> | Not yet fulfilled      | MFDPS is currently not yet meeting this criterion; however, the institution is systematically exploring opportunities for project applications (ERC and HORIZON), collaborations, and possible inclusion in relevant EU research initiatives. Active communication and exchange of information regarding potential opportunities are ongoing. |