

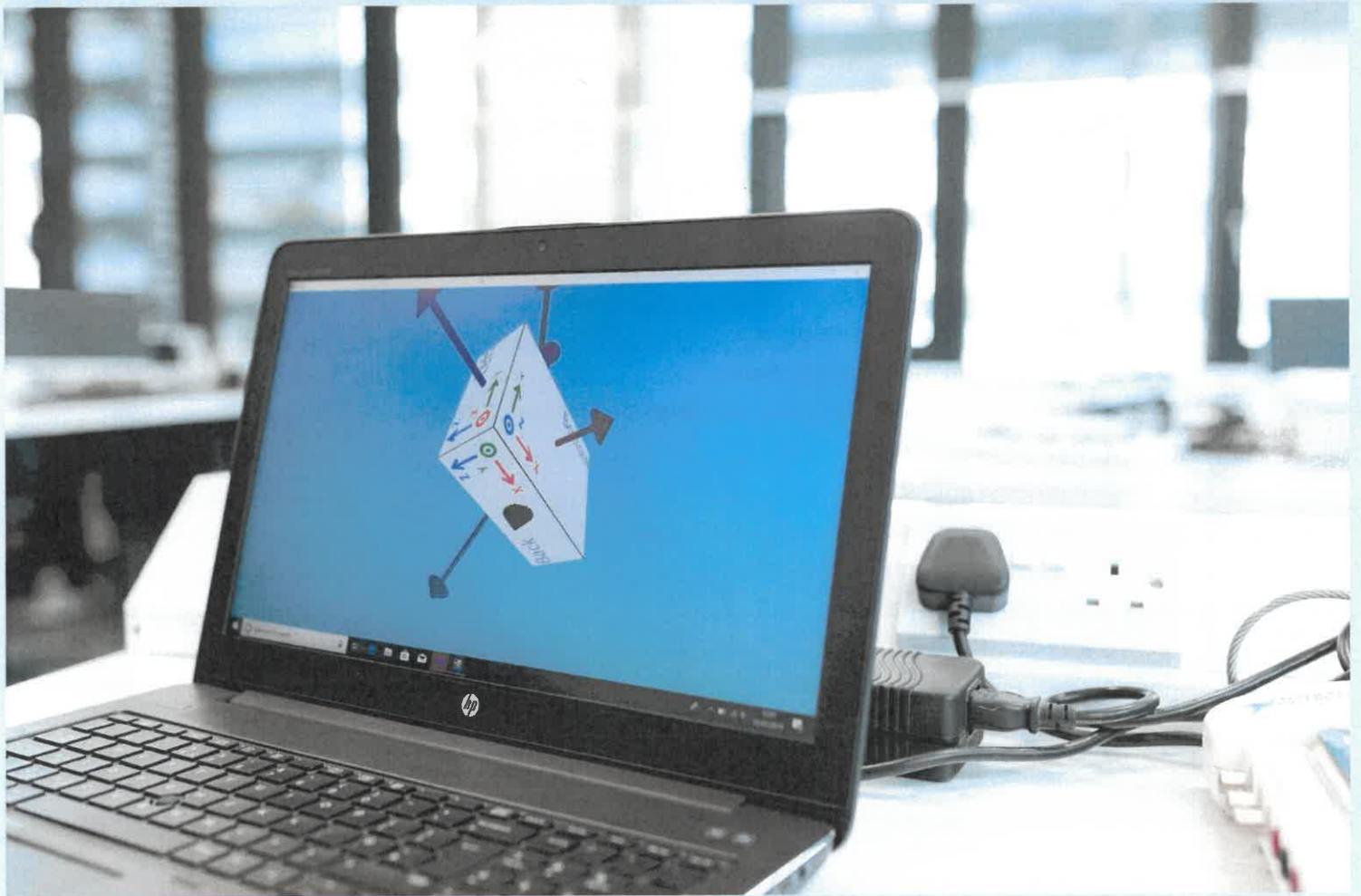


# EVALUATION REPORT

Renewal Evaluation of the UNESCO  
Category 2 Centre:

**Institute of Information Science  
(IZUM)**

November, 2025 | FINAL VERSION



## Contents

1. Abbreviations .....	2
2. Executive summary .....	4
3. Introduction / Background.....	6
4. Methodology .....	9
5. Findings.....	11
5.1. Relevance.....	11
5.2. Coherence .....	12
5.3. Effectiveness .....	13
5.4. Efficiency.....	14
5.5. Impact.....	16
5.6. Sustainability .....	16
6. Conclusions .....	19
7. Recommendations .....	21
7.1. Strategic recommendations .....	21
7.2. Operational recommendations.....	22
7.3. Formal recommendation on renewal of Category 2 status .....	24
Annex 1: Call for proposals.....	25
Annex 2: Interview guides.....	28
Annex 3: Field mission agenda .....	30
Annex 4: Personnel structure of IZUM .....	32
Annex 5: Documents reviewed .....	33
Annex 6: List of interviews .....	35
Annex 7: Draft renewal agreement .....	36
Annex 8: Partners and cooperating bodies and organizations.....	43

## 1. Abbreviations

ADG/CI	Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information (UNESCO)
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AI4SDGs	Artificial Intelligence for the Sustainable Development Goals
AWS	Amazon Web Services
C/4	UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy (Eight-Year Strategic Framework)
C/5	UNESCO Approved Program and Budget (Four-Year Operational Plan)
C2C	Category 2 Centre - Institute or Centre under the auspices of UNESCO (not legally part of the Organization)
COBISS	Co-operative Online Bibliographic System & Services
COE	Council of Europe
COP	Conference of the Parties / Community of Practice (context-dependent)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
D4D	Digital for Development (EU Initiative)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GB	Governing Board (of IRCAI)
GoS	Government of Slovenia
HQ	Headquarters (UNESCO, Paris)
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IRCAI	International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO
IZUM	Institute of Information Science
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JAISD	Journal of AI for Sustainable Development (IRCAI publication)
JSI	Jožef Stefan Institute (Host institution of IRCAI, Ljubljana)
LMS	Learning Management System
MC	Management Council (IRCAI Governing Body)
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Republic of Slovenia)
MHESI	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (Republic of Slovenia)
MDT	Ministry of Digital Transformation (Republic of Slovenia)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAIXUS	<i>Network of AI Excellence Centres for the SDGs</i> coordinated by IRCAI
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development



## Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

- OER Open Educational Resources
- PAS Project Accounting System (financial management system within JSI)
- R&D Research and Development
- RAM Responsible AI Monitoring Observatory (IRCAI platform)
- SDGs Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2030 Agenda)
- SIDS Small Island Developing States
- STEM Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- ToR Terms of Reference
- UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UN United Nations
- WSIS World Summit on the Information Society

## 2. Executive summary

*Purpose of the evaluation and scope (retrospective + prospective).*

*Brief description of IZUM and its mandate.*

*Main findings under UNESCO's evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability).*

*Key conclusions on governance, autonomy, and financial viability.*

*Summary recommendations, including formal recommendation on renewal of Category 2 status.*

The evaluation of the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) was conducted under the framework of UNESCO's *Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres* (40 C/79), which mandates an independent review every six years to inform the renewal of Category 2 status.

Its purpose is to determine whether IZUM continues to meet the criteria for renewal as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, and to provide forward-looking recommendations for its institutional and strategic development.

The evaluation shows that IZUM has fully met the expectations of a UNESCO Category 2 Centre. It operates effectively, autonomously, and efficiently, delivering high-quality outputs with rather modest resources. Its results - an interoperable regional library system, a professionalized information sector, and active South-Eastern European cooperation - embody UNESCO's core principles of knowledge sharing and regional solidarity.

The scope of the evaluation covers the period from IZUM's establishment in 2012 as a Category 2 Centre through mid-2025, considering activities, outputs, governance, partnerships, and financial performance. Sources of evidence include: official documents (agreement with UNESCO, financial reports, annual activity reports 2012 - 2025, publications etc.), data collected during and post the field mission, presentations, interviews with IZUM leadership and staff, interviews with UNESCO, Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO representatives, representatives from Slovenian Ministries, partner institutions, and international experts, other documents presented by IZUM upon request.

The evaluation combined desk research of official documents, annual reports, financial statements, legal agreements, relevant UNESCO policy documents etc., field mission interviews and group discussions held in Maribor (September 2025), and online interviews with selected international partners and UNESCO representatives.

The research shows that IZUM's operations are aligned with the UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres (2019). Its relevance is firmly anchored in its role as the principal regional knowledge-infrastructure institution in South-Eastern Europe. Across all reviewed years, the COBISS.net network has served as a backbone for library interoperability, cataloguing standards, and research visibility across eight countries.

IZUM's operations demonstrate high coherence. All functional components - software development, hosting, training, and regional coordination - are interlinked under a single institutional structure.



## Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

Over the period covered by the evaluation, IZUM delivered a steady stream of tangible results that substantiate its effectiveness.

Financially, IZUM operates efficiently on a rather modest resource base. Most regional activities have been financed from its regular state budget allocation and self-generated income. IZUM's governance model ensures both accountability and operational agility. As a public institute, it is not constrained by academic governance procedures or multi-layered bureaucracy.

The cumulative impact of IZUM's work over the period 2013-2021 is substantial. The COBISS.net network has transformed library and research information management across the Western Balkans, providing interoperable infrastructure where fragmented systems once prevailed.

IZUM's strategic role in the development and integration of library and research information systems in Southeast Europe directly contributes to UNESCO's priorities (access to knowledge, digital transformation, capacity building, regional cooperation) and to SDG 4 (quality education).

Renewal of IZUM's Category 2 status under the auspices of UNESCO is recommended, with emphasis for the next period on: institutional strengthening, strategic positioning and vision alignment with UNESCO, diversification of funding (EU and other foreseeable sources), and developing further partnerships and advocacy initiatives.

### 3. Introduction / Background

#### **Context: UNESCO's 2019 Strategy for Category 2 Centres (40 C/79)**

In November 2019, UNESCO's General Conference adopted the *Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO (40 C/79)*. The Strategy introduced harmonized governance, reporting, and evaluation requirements, including a **mandatory evaluation every six years** to inform decisions on the renewal of Category 2 status. The Strategy places strong emphasis on:

- Alignment with UNESCO's programmatic priorities and global strategies.
- Ensuring the autonomy and sustainability of Category 2 Centres.
- Transparent governance and accountability, with host government commitment.
- Contribution to UNESCO's global impact, including through partnerships, capacity building, and South-South cooperation.

This evaluation of the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) in Maribor, Slovenia, is undertaken within that framework, applying the criteria and procedures mandated by the 2019 Strategy.

#### **History and legal basis of the Centre (agreement with UNESCO and Slovenia)**

The Institute of Information Science (IZUM) located in Maribor, Slovenia, is a public institution established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia (under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation) as an information infrastructural service for Slovenian science, culture and education. Along with other agents of information activities in the country, it ensures Slovenia an entrance to the streams of the modern world's information society.

The institute started to operate in the 1980s, when the Computer Centre of the University of Maribor (RCUM) transformed into a modern information infrastructure centre. Its key milestone was the development of the COBISS system, which became the foundation of Slovenia's library information system and later spread to other countries through the COBISS.net network. IZUM was appointed to lead a Yugoslav project on scientific and technological information in 1988 and has since evolved, managing national research databases and the VEGA supercomputer.

The Centre functions as a hub for library automation, bibliographic standardization, and regional capacity building.

It also operates as the Regional UNESCO Centre for Library Information Systems and Current Research Information Systems. Its statutory mission is to coordinate the COBISS (Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services) and the regional COBISS.net network, interconnecting national library information systems in Slovenia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Albania, and Kosovo.

The development and operation of the Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS) is IZUM's core activity. This system is the central library information system in Slovenia and is used in other countries via the COBISS.net network.

It provides hosting services, develops and maintains the COBISS3 software suite, and trains librarians and IT professionals. It has full legal personality, the right to contract,

and operational autonomy. The regional COBISS.net Council, composed of national library directors and heads of national COBISS centres, provides governance and collective oversight.

Cooperation with UNESCO was formally established in 2012, following an agreement signed between UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia on 18 September 2012, yet ratified in 2020. The agreement entrusted IZUM to operate as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

The agreement specifies Slovenia's obligation to provide the necessary conditions for the Centre's operation, including premises, infrastructure, and financial support; the transformation and operation of the institute into IZUM - Regional Centre for Library Information Systems and Current Research Information Systems; IZUM's mandate to contribute to UNESCO's strategic objectives, particularly in bibliographic system and services.

### **Objectives and mandate of the Centre**

As set out in the agreement, IZUM's objectives should be:

- coordination of the development and operation of the **shared bibliographic system** and services;
- coordination of the **development and application of standards** for computer support to meet the requirements of the shared bibliographic system and services;
- **software development and maintenance** to meet the requirements of the shared bibliographic system and services;
- determination of the suitability of library staff for shared cataloguing purposes, in co-operation with the National Libraries of the countries participating in COBISS.net;
- planning and maintenance of the central computer and communications capacity to enable the functioning of the system;
- management of the offer of databases on electronic data carriers, with direct access by agreement with their producers;
- organization of professional training and counselling in the fields covered by the shared bibliographic system;
- **coordination of the information system** for monitoring research activities in the different COBISS.net countries;
- participation in **public programs for the development of COBISS.net** as a means for developing knowledge societies in the region;
- engineering for the development and maintenance of a computer and communications infrastructure in educational, research and cultural organizations;
- research, development and counselling in its field of work.

### **Purpose, scope, and intended users of this evaluation**

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether IZUM continues to meet the requirements for renewal of its status as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre, in line with the 2019 Strategy. The evaluation examines:



## Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

- **Relevance:** Alignment of IZUM's mandate and activities with UNESCO's priorities and global agendas.
- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which IZUM has delivered on its objectives and produced results of international significance.
- **Governance and Autonomy:** The adequacy of institutional arrangements, including legal status, governance structures, and host country support.
- **Sustainability:** Financial viability, partnerships, and capacity to maintain and expand operations.

The scope of the evaluation covers the period from IZUM's establishment in 2012 as a Category 2 Centre through mid-2025, considering activities, outputs, governance, partnerships, and financial performance. Sources of evidence include: official documents (agreement with UNESCO, financial reports, annual activity reports 2012 - 2025, publications etc.), data collected during and post the field mission, presentations, interviews with IZUM leadership and staff, interviews with UNESCO, Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO representatives, representatives from Slovenian Ministries, partner institutions, and international experts, other documents presented by IZUM upon request.

The intended users of the evaluation are: UNESCO Secretariat and Governing Bodies, Government of Slovenia, Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO, IZUM leadership and governance bodies.

## 4. Methodology

### Approach

The evaluation was conducted in line with the UNESCO Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres (40 C/79), applying the methodological framework outlined in the Strategicus Consulting proposal and further detailed in the Inception Report (July 2025). It assesses the performance of the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) during the period 2012-2025, determining whether its mandate, outputs, and institutional capacity continue to justify its designation as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre.

The evaluation combined:

- desk research of official documents, annual reports, financial statements, legal agreements, relevant UNESCO policy documents etc.
- field mission interviews and group discussions held in Maribor (September 2025).
- online interviews with selected international partners and UNESCO representatives.

This mixed-method approach ensured triangulation across documentary evidence, institutional perspectives, and stakeholder feedback.

### Data sources

Primary sources: annual UNESCO activity reports submitted by IZUM for 2013-2021, including quantitative data on libraries, training, and partnerships.

Legal and strategic documents: the UNESCO-Slovenia Agreement, the 2019 Strategy for Category 2 Centres, COBISS.net Council minutes, and IZUM's institutional statute.

Field mission: interviews conducted in Maribor with IZUM management, technical staff and (in Ljubljana) with the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO and government officials.

External validation: review of IZUM's and COBISS.net's web presence (izum.si, cobiss.net, cobiss.si), public metrics, and inclusion in international knowledge networks (EOSC, Western Balkans Info Hub).

### Evaluation scope and criteria

The evaluation focuses on whether IZUM has:

- fulfilled its mandate as defined in the UNESCO - Slovenia agreement;
- achieved tangible outputs and measurable results across its programs;
- aligned its operations with UNESCO's strategic objectives;
- maintained institutional autonomy, efficiency, and financial sustainability.

The evaluation examines both retrospective results and prospective value added, under UNESCO's six standard criteria (defined in the 2019 Strategy):

Relevance: alignment of IZUM's mandate and activities with UNESCO's C/4, C/5, and global strategies (SDGs, recommendation on AI Ethics).

Coherence: quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO (HQ, field, National Commissions, other C1/C2 centres), and complementarity with other initiatives.



## Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

**Effectiveness:** extent to which IZUM achieved its objectives, delivered outputs, and contributed to UNESCO and global agendas.

**Efficiency:** adequacy of institutional arrangements, governance, management, HR, and financial use for results.

**Impact:** significance of IZUM's contributions internationally and nationally, visibility, and influence on policy debates.

**Sustainability:** financial viability, partnerships, long-term institutional resilience, autonomy and legal capacity.

### **Approach and validation**

Evidence from reports was cross-checked against web data, press coverage, and interview testimony to validate implementation claims. This triangulation distinguished between planned, implemented, and partially executed activities.

The analysis also assessed whether activities align with the functions stipulated in the UNESCO agreement: coordination of regional information systems, capacity building, knowledge sharing, and participation in UNESCO's global programs.

### **Limitations**

The evaluation mission took place in September 2025, before the end of the reporting year; some activities for 2025 were ongoing.

Financial data were uneven before 2017; external beneficiary surveys were unavailable.

These limitations do not materially affect the credibility of findings, as technical and quantitative evidence is strong and consistent.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Relevance

*Alignment with UNESCO's Approved Program & Budget (C/5) and global strategies e.g. COBISS.Net & knowledge societies.*

*Contribution to global development agendas.*

IZUM's mandate as a public institution established by the government of Slovenia is to develop and manage COBISS and CRIS systems and related services as the backbone of national and regional library information systems. This work directly supports UNESCO's mission to promote knowledge sharing, strengthen knowledge societies, and foster digital equity. Its designation as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO confirms that IZUM, having an independent legal status and regional reach, contributes to UNESCO's priorities through international cooperation, capacity building, advisory services, and the transfer of best practices. COBISS.net embodies UNESCO's vision in the field of communication and information by creating a connected, standardized, and inclusive information infrastructure that ensures sustainable and ethical knowledge management.

IZUM's relevance is firmly anchored in its role as the principal regional knowledge-infrastructure institution in South-Eastern Europe. Across all reviewed years, the COBISS.net network has served as a backbone for library interoperability, cataloguing standards, and research visibility across eight countries.

Its functions - software development, data hosting, and librarian training - are directly aligned with UNESCO's mission to build inclusive knowledge societies and strengthen information systems for education, science, and culture.

IZUM and COBISS.net significantly contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) by improving access to scientific resources; SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by developing robust digital research infrastructure; and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by fostering regional cooperation among libraries and research institutions. This aligns with UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science, which emphasizes openness of scientific content, data, and tools as a driver for accelerating the 2030 Agenda. At the national level, IZUM's activities are consistent with Slovenia's Research and Innovation Strategy 2030, which embeds open science principles into the national research ecosystem and foresees implementation measures such as the Open Science Action Plan. These frameworks provide the legal and financial basis for COBISS.net as a key national and regional support platform.

Government officials reaffirmed this position, describing IZUM as a "*stable and mature institution that has fulfilled its mission for many years*" and "*the face of Slovenia's cooperation in South-Eastern Europe*".

#### **Alignment with UNESCO's strategies**

IZUM's operations are aligned with the UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres (2019). The strategy requires C2Cs to be independent, legally autonomous institutions with proven excellence, international or regional

outreach, and a clear link to UNESCO's approved program (C/5). COBISS.net meets these criteria as a regional infrastructure that connects multiple countries and adheres to international library standards and data exchange mechanisms. Governance, programming, monitoring, and reporting follow the model provisions outlined in the 2019 Strategy, ensuring coherence with UNESCO's priorities and global agendas.

IZUM complies with the key provisions of the 2019 Strategy, ensured with its own funds and other funding allocated for development aid by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in Slovenia. IZUM operates autonomously and UNESCO (or other institutional body) does not finance any institutional costs.

The COBISS.net Council includes national representatives and UNESCO participation in meetings, reflecting alignment with the 2019 Strategy guidelines on stakeholders and oversight.

COBISS.net is also the standard in the region: it enhances the visibility of research results and access to information for public, university, and other libraries and their users, and creates a supportive environment for open science and open access.

However, two strategic limitations affect the full realization of this relevance:

1. IZUM's participation in UNESCO's global thematic frameworks - such as Open Science, Information for All (IFAP), or Memory of the World - remains limited. This is not due to neglect but to the Centre's strong technical orientation and the absence of formal liaison channels for these domains. Establishing joint projects or shared datasets under UNESCO programs would strengthen its global alignment and visibility.
2. The long-standing non-participation of Albania's National Library in COBISS.net remains a gap in regional completeness. Despite the inclusion of more than 30 Albanian academic and public libraries, the lack of endorsement from national authority restricts the network's integration. This issue, recurring in reports from 2014 to 2019, stems from institutional disputes rather than technical barriers. Addressing it may require mediation at intergovernmental or UNESCO field-office level.

In essence, IZUM's relevance to regional development and UNESCO's objectives is unquestionable. Its future strategic relevance depends on a stronger presence within UNESCO's global policy arenas and completion of regional inclusivity.

## 5.2. Coherence

*Coordination with UNESCO (HQ and field offices) and National Commissions. Synergies with other Category 1 and 2 institutes/centres.*

Internally, IZUM's operations demonstrate high coherence. All functional components - software development, hosting, training, and regional coordination - are interlinked under a single institutional structure.

The COBISS.net Council plays a key role in ensuring alignment among member states, meeting regularly to review progress and adopt shared standards. The

system's multilingual interfaces and uniform modules illustrate exceptional coherence across diverse linguistic and administrative environments.

Coordination with UNESCO has been largely procedural rather than programmatic. Annual reports have been submitted consistently, but participation in UNESCO events and exchanges has been sporadic. Between 2014 and 2019, IZUM noted that it had not been invited to UNESCO regional meetings, and interaction was limited to correspondence. This restricted communication has had two effects: IZUM's contributions to UNESCO's broader information policy work remain under-recognized, and opportunities for knowledge exchange are missed. **Reinstating a regular UNESCO - IZUM contact point** or periodic review dialogue could address this gap.

Synergies with other centres are emerging but not yet institutionalized. The potential complementarity between IZUM and IRCAI is evident: IZUM provides structured bibliographic and research data; IRCAI develops AI-driven tools for data analysis and ethics. A joint initiative could demonstrate Slovenia's leadership in connecting digital infrastructure with artificial intelligence for knowledge access. At present, collaboration between the two remains informal.

Overall, **IZUM's internal coherence and regional coordination are strong**; external coherence within UNESCO's network remains underdeveloped but perfectly attainable.

### 5.3. Effectiveness

*Achievement of objectives set out in agreements.*

*Performance of flagship programs and outputs.*

*Uptake and visibility of results.*

Stakeholders see IZUM as an effective, well-performing institution, that delivers visible and technically credible outputs. Over the period covered by the evaluation, IZUM delivered a steady stream of tangible results that substantiate its effectiveness.

**Network growth and consolidation.** The number of libraries outside Slovenia integrated into COBISS.net rose from around 280 in 2013 to more than 500 by 2021. Integration expanded sharply in North Macedonia (20 new libraries in 2019) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (11 in 2018). Kosovo joined in 2018, achieving full geographic coverage of the Western Balkans. Overall, the COBISS.net network includes 1,487 libraries (as of 2025) in eight countries; a technological transition from COBISS3 to COBISS Cat and COBISS Lib was carried out (1 July 2025); there are more than 52 million items in local databases (as of 27 January 2025) - the indicators strengthen efficiency and interoperability.

**Training and professional development.** Between 2013 and 2021, more than 6,000 librarians were trained, and 2,500 cataloguing licenses were issued. Training intensity rose from 19 courses in 2013 to 80 in 2018, covering modules on cataloguing, holdings, acquisitions, and authority control. By 2021, all partner countries had certified local instructors, confirming successful transfer of know-how and institutionalization of training capacity.

**Software development and innovation.** IZUM successfully migrated all partner systems to the COBISS3 platform, developed new modules, and implemented authority control in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria. The launch of COBISS+, mCOBISS, and dCOBISS introduced user-oriented and digital-repository functions, aligning with open-access principles. Migration to Linux servers and PostgreSQL databases (2019-2021) further improved system stability and cost efficiency.

**Activities not implemented.** Some planned activities were postponed or cancelled. The postgraduate librarianship program at the University of Shkoder, envisioned as a regional capacity-building measure, has remained blocked since 2013 for reasons beyond IZUM's control. Similarly, initiatives for subsidized access to international e-resources and WorldCat harmonization were curtailed for financial or contractual reasons. However, these unfulfilled items are peripheral to IZUM's core mandate and do not compromise overall goal achievement.

**Evidence from web presence** confirms effective implementation. The COBISS and IZUM websites publicly show active services, updated user documentation, and performance indicators. The open publication of usage statistics - loan numbers, cataloguing records, and system updates - provides independent confirmation that operations are ongoing and transparent.

The overall evidence points to **consistent achievement of objectives**. IZUM's results have been delivered on schedule, across borders, and with enduring regional impact. A government-supported fellowship and visiting researcher program would also enhance IZUM's effectiveness by attracting global expertise, creating stronger links between international partners and IZUM, and deepening knowledge exchange around its intertwined areas of interest - science, culture and education - as well as for sustainable development.

#### 5.4. Efficiency

*Governance and organizational arrangements.*

*Management and accountability mechanisms.*

*Human resources and capacity.*

IZUM's governance model ensures both accountability and operational agility. As a public institute, it is not constrained by academic governance procedures or multi-layered bureaucracy. This autonomy enables rapid decision-making on software updates, procurement, and regional service provision.

Financially, IZUM operates efficiently on a rather modest resource base. Most regional activities have been financed from its regular state budget allocation and self-generated income. Despite repeated references to "*lack of expected financial resources*", the Centre maintained high performance levels. The 2021 allocation of EUR 20,000 for COBISS.net activities from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports presented a more formal framework for state co-financing of its international mission.

The field mission in Maribor and the interviews conducted with several stakeholders - corroborated with an overview of IZUM's activities, results and their

general impact - reveals that the Centre's activities are well implemented and the staff's level of performance is very high, a result of many years of steady development.

Most informants interviewed during the research agree that IZUM's overall activities are highly relevant to UNESCO's approved Program and Budget (C/5) at the time of the initial Agreement, at its renewal, and remain relevant for the future.

IZUM is highly appreciated in terms of employment, career opportunities and development. During the years following the establishment as a Category 2 Centre, informants reported IZUM changed, slowly, its organizational culture: "The best professionals are retiring. Young employees came and changed the atmosphere, positivity is growing, there is better attitude, personal connections, and lots of communication". However, the years to come bring more challenges concerning human resources: the average age of employees is around 50, and many will retire in the following 10-15 years.

Staff numbers remain stable (approximately 70-80), yet the institution manages to serve a network of hundreds of libraries. The distributed training model - delegating instruction to certified trainers in partner countries - has multiplied reach without corresponding increases in staff costs. This decentralized approach demonstrates efficient use of human capital.

IZUM's web transparency reinforces this efficiency. Its websites ([izum.si](http://izum.si), [cobiss.net](http://cobiss.net), [cobiss.si](http://cobiss.si)) provide open access to documentation, updates, and performance data, allowing stakeholders to track outputs and services in real time. The publication of multilingual materials reduces support overhead and enhances cost-effectiveness.

As future prospects, IZUM plans to upgrade COBISS towards greater interoperability, implementation of linked data, and full compliance with even more international standards, enabling richer, more cost-effective, and semantically integrated bibliographic records, better connected and transparent research results and new services.

Further regional expansion and deeper cooperation with Southeast European countries would be based on standardized procedures, joint training programs, and the promotion of open science practices (open repositories, responsible metrics, citizen science), in line with UNESCO's Open Science Recommendation and national policies.

The institute suggests also strengthening connections with global catalogues and identifiers and with European and international initiatives - to increase the visibility of regional output and facilitate cross-border research collaboration.

The combination of autonomy, lean structure, and transparent service provision demonstrates an efficient institutional model. The main challenge is sustainability of human resources: maintaining a small permanent team to handle regional demands could lead to overstretch in the medium term. Securing project-based staff or external consultants could balance workload and preserve agility.

## 5.5. Impact

*Evidence of outcomes at national, regional, and international levels.  
Influence on policy, knowledge, and practice.*

The cumulative impact of IZUM's work over the period 2013-2021 is substantial. The COBISS.net network has transformed library and research information management across the Western Balkans, providing interoperable infrastructure where fragmented systems once prevailed.

Libraries in seven countries now share a common bibliographic database structure, facilitating interlibrary cooperation and national bibliographies. This has directly improved access to educational and research materials.

The professional community built through COBISS training and conferences has strengthened social capital among information professionals. Thousands of librarians and IT specialists now share a common professional vocabulary and standards, which enhances regional academic integration.

The COBISS Days and biennial COBISS Conferences serve as practical knowledge-sharing platforms, attended by 250-300 participants per edition. These events promote cross-country dialogue, showcase innovation, and reinforce cultural exchange.

IZUM's website is visible, high on search engines, and contains useful information for the general public. However, it needs to be better restructured and more attractive visually, and provide more information and data which is available. The Facebook page of COBISS is well visited and has over 3,900 followers - mostly young people, students and researchers. In the last years it has been provided with interesting, updated content - both informational and entertaining - and this engaged a wider and diverse audience.

The symbolic impact extends to regional diplomacy. Government officials remarked that "*IZUM's cooperation model is one of Slovenia's most successful exports*", highlighting its role in fostering stability & cooperation through soft power.

Externally, IZUM's inclusion in the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and other international directories signals recognition of its infrastructure's quality. However, while IZUM's systems underpin open knowledge, its contributions are rarely framed within UNESCO's global narratives on Open Science or digital inclusion. More explicit branding of COBISS as a UNESCO-related initiative would enhance its normative impact.

In short, IZUM's impact is tangible in the region, verified by both quantitative and qualitative evidence, yet its international policy resonance remains underexploited.

## 5.6. Sustainability

*Partnerships with government, donors, and other stakeholders.  
Financial viability and resource mobilization.  
Autonomy and legal capacity.*

IZUM's sustainability rests on three pillars: national financial support, regional

ownership, and technological resilience.

The Slovenian government ensures predictable funding as part of the public research-infrastructure budget. Officials described this support as "*predictable and recurring, ensuring long-term stability*". The recent earmarked contribution for COBISS.net suggests recognition of its international value.

Regional sustainability is embedded in the COBISS.net model: each member country maintains a national centre responsible for implementation, while IZUM provides core development and hosting. This arrangement spreads costs and fosters ownership.

Technological sustainability is high. The migration to open-source platforms and shared hosting has reduced costs and enhanced security. System availability now exceeds 99%.

Financial diversification, however, remains limited. IZUM has yet to secure significant external project funding. Participation in Horizon Europe, Creative Europe, or UNESCO-EU joint initiatives would provide new resources and strengthen alignment with international priorities.

In terms of communication sustainability, the Centre's web presence offers visibility and transparency but lacks the narrative dimension typical of UNESCO's Category 2 communication standards. The focus on technical data over development impact narratives limits outreach to non-technical audiences. Enhancing web communication - through case studies, multilingual storytelling, and visible UNESCO branding - would support both reputational and financial sustainability.

Overall, IZUM's institutional and operational sustainability are secure; financial and communicative diversification remain its primary frontiers.

#### International COBISS conferences and user meetings of the COBISS.net network (2014-2024)

EVENT	DATES	STATISTICS	LOCATION
COBISS Conference	23-24 October 2024	34 presentations attended by more than 700 participants from 11 countries in person at IZUM as well as online via Zoom.	Institute of Information Science, Maribor, Slovenia
COBISS Days	28 November 2023	More than 300 participants followed the event at IZUM and online.	Institute of Information Science, Maribor, Slovenia
COBISS Conference	19-22 October 2022	25 presenters from Slovenia and abroad. 24 presentations attended by more than	Institute of Information Science, Maribor, Slovenia



Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

EVENT	DATES	STATISTICS	LOCATION
		600 participants from 12 countries as well as online via Zoom.	
COBISS Meet	10 December 2020	619 participants from more than ten countries. 1,500 comments, greetings, questions, and answers in the online chat during the event.	Institute of Information Science, Maribor, Slovenia
COBISS Conference	27-29 November 2018	260 participants from 11 countries.	Institute of Information Science, Maribor, Slovenia
COBISS Conference	22-23 November 2016	N/A	Institute of Information Science, Maribor, Slovenia
COBISS Conference	19-20 November 2014	Over 250 participants from more than ten countries.	Kongresni center Habakuk, Maribor, Slovenia

## 6. Conclusions

*Overall assessment of performance since establishment.*

*Contribution to UNESCO's mandate and strategic priorities.*

*Prospective value added (future role and comparative advantage).*

IZUM has fully met the expectations of a UNESCO Category 2 Centre. It operates effectively, autonomously, and efficiently, delivering high-quality outputs with rather modest resources. Its results - an interoperable regional library system, a professionalized information sector, and active South-Eastern European cooperation - embody UNESCO's core principles of knowledge sharing and regional solidarity.

In recent years, IZUM has made a significant transition to the requirements of the 2019 Strategy, with solid results in the COBISS.net network. Management structures, scope of services, and technological upgrades are **consistent with the role of a regional center of excellence** that contributes to UNESCO's priorities.

IZUM has restructured its reporting and management to reflect its contribution to UNESCO's priorities and acts as a **regional knowledge and infrastructure hub** (COBISS, SICRIS/E CRIS, bibliographies) for several countries in the region.

IZUM's strategic role in the development and integration of library and research information systems in Southeast Europe directly contributes to UNESCO's priorities (access to knowledge, digital transformation, capacity building, regional cooperation) and to SDG 4 (quality education).

The absence of budgetary constraints, a systematic approach to pursuing the proposed objectives, cooperation with other institutions and with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation allowed IZUM to have a **dynamic presence and contribution** to international events (conferences, meetings, workshops etc.) - confirmed by the interviews.

IZUM's programs **directly respond to the needs of the region** (standardization, interoperability, visibility of research) and contribute to UNESCO's priorities in education, science, and information.

Since the members of COBISS.net are (mostly) countries from former Yugoslavia, less privileged nations started to achieve results: scientific research and literature-wise documentation became accessible for everyone, cultural dialogue increased - which is part of UNESCO's strategy. COBISS.net promotes tools which enable easier transition to digitization and related adopting and implementation of policies. However, in some member countries the shift is yet to come, addressing the identified needs.

Another challenge for IZUM is to **encourage the members of COBISS network to be more active** and become 'real' stakeholders in the IZUM ecosystem. Also, the COBISS council is very silent - people are not eager to communicate; they need to understand their role and tasks, and contribute more to the overall impact on global development.

The Centre's credibility is reinforced by external evidence: excellent results (network expansion, consolidation of shared cataloguing, services upgrades, training for librarians and researchers etc.), functional websites with open metrics, active services, and sustained public engagement. These confirm that **reported achievements are genuine and ongoing**.

IZUM's Action Plan 2024-2028 "Supporting the development of national library information systems in the countries of the South Eastern Europe and their integration in a common educational, research and cultural area" is ambitious and established a clear vision, as well as goals and conditions for the implementation. However, UNESCO is mentioned only in two instances: IZUM's active participation in UNESCO events in the region and in an exhaustive list of stakeholders. Therefore, the strategy needs to show greater relevance between what IZUM's objectives and deliverables, and UNESCO's objectives. Similarly, the renewed agreement between IZUM and UNESCO needs to be in total harmony with the strategy, and specify what needs to be delivered. In other words, the objectives in the agreement need to part of IZUM's strategy and operational plan.

Areas requiring further strengthening are, therefore, **strategic rather than operational**, and - if achieved - would transform IZUM from a technical success story into a fully visible component of UNESCO's knowledge ecosystem:

- greater integration with UNESCO's global frameworks
- diversification of funding
- richer documentation of qualitative impacts.

The government's view captures this duality: IZUM is "*mature, stable, regionally important, and in need of greater documentation and modernization alignment*".

## 7. Recommendations

The following recommendations are grouped under two complementary levels of action, and propose a coherent roadmap for IZUM's consolidation in the UNESCO ecosystem and the modern world's information society.

### 7.1. Strategic recommendations

One of the main priorities for IZUM (with support from the government and the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO) should be to continue its efforts to **actively involve Member States in its regional and international mission**. This could be achieved through capacity-development and educational programs - which also address the above-mentioned stakeholders, as well as decision-makers at national and regional level - should continue in order to observe at a maximum the strategy for UNESCO Category 2 Centres.

To consolidate achievements and enhance future contribution:

**Renewal of status:** UNESCO should renew IZUM's designation as a Category 2 Centre for the period 2026-2032, recognizing its exemplary performance and strategic value for South-Eastern Europe.

**Global integration:** establish regular participation in UNESCO's Open Science and IFAP activities and co-brand COBISS events under UNESCO's banner.

Institutional members of the UNESCO family know what IZUM has to offer and the added value they are offering, therefore no interactions between IZUM / COBISS and other institutes under the UNESCO umbrella should be necessary intermediated by the secretariat.

The institute also needs to connect to the broader human rights - connecting indirectly with the citizens - and observe how its work is impacting the society. In other words, it needs to embrace the broader agenda of promoting the universal right to information:

- strategic positioning and vision alignment - by explicitly supporting access to information as a human right and mapping how IZUM's existing services i.e. data access, digital libraries, open science platforms - contribute to social transparency, knowledge equity, and informed citizenship.
- develop partnerships and advocacy through cooperation with organizations focusing on access to information and digital inclusion, and participating in policy dialogues or working groups on digital rights, open data, and information accessibility - at national and EU levels.

Annual events tied with UNESCO activities should focus on knowledge dissemination and go beyond the Balkan area.

**Funding diversification:** develop and implement a resource mobilization plan targeting EU, Horizon Europe, and regional innovation programs.

To become an influential actor in the UNESCO ecosystem, IZUM must also develop its internal capacities to develop projects and fundraise its future initiatives, especially through EU funding. It must be more and deeper involved in

UNESCO conferences, join executive boards, observe sessions, and get new partners - all this would serve to a better understand of how they can support the member states.

**Impact documentation:** create a monitoring framework linking system data to educational and social outcomes, complemented by narrative reports and user stories. Reporting could be also improved by:

- developing social impact indicators to track how IZUM's initiatives contribute to human rights and information accessibility;
- publishing annual impact reports on the right to information, summarizing progress, success stories, and areas for improvement.

**Enhanced communication:** expand the web presence with multilingual content, case studies, and comparative regional indicators, and explicitly feature UNESCO affiliation.

**Collaboration and innovation:** formalize cooperation with IRCAI and other centres on digital ethics, AI-assisted metadata, and regional digital-literacy programs.

IZUM should also constantly try to improve its cooperation and interaction with other thematically-related Category 2 institutes or centres as it would greatly improve its effectiveness and help building its sustainability on long-term (through models of good practice and exchange of knowledge). UNESCO is key in supporting the establishment of such relations, especially with non-European initiatives.

Overall, IZUM has achieved a fair number of activities covering its functions related to educating the general public. However it must also generate strong(er) lines of cooperation with other Category 2 Centres, by sharing experiences, specialists, information and activities in order to reinforce capacity-building for the implementation of UNESCO priorities and share specialized technical knowledge.

The exchange of knowledge should be supported through dissemination of the findings, knowledge and expertise, as well as participation in international events and involvement in international research programs.

By implementing these measures, IZUM can consolidate its role as a regional leader in knowledge infrastructure and a globally connected actor within UNESCO's family of centres.

## 7.2. Operational recommendations<sup>1</sup>

Formalize governance routines by establishing an annual Board calendar; standardize agendas, minutes and decision logs; issue brief semi-annual updates to the National Commission and UNESCO HQ.

Add targeted capacity, by hiring, or appointing dedicated staff for partnerships/resource mobilization and for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) to match program scale.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some of these recommendations pertain to both IRCAI and IZUM.

More activities should be envisaged outside the governmental framework, since IZUM functions in a competitive environment.

Planning for the future should include strategic planning points - stronger to areas in which IZUM could do more and have greater impact with continued and increased resources - and therefore consider implementing UNESCO priorities in the same time as meeting robustly national and regional priorities in research and education, achieve impact in the fields of literacy, knowledge and scientific work sharing, diversity, multilingualism etc.

Unify results monitoring & documentation, by establish a repository, a simple but centralized system for monitoring and documenting results. This repository should consolidate information on outputs, partnerships, finances, and follow-up actions, allowing the Centre to independently generate concise, evidence-based progress reports efficiently.

Identify additional areas where IZUM expertise might be of support to the partner states, and promote examples of cooperation.

Establish Government-Backed Fellowship and Exchange programs, launch international fellowship and residency schemes to attract world-class scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to Maribor. These programs would enhance knowledge transfer, foster South-South and North-South cooperation, and consolidate IZUM's role as a model of good practice for library information systems.

Strengthen Partnership Facilitation Mechanisms, introducing structured mechanisms to support the development and management of partnerships with international organizations, governments, and private-sector actors. These mechanisms should combine legal, diplomatic, and technical support, ensuring co-developed projects.

#### **Monitoring activities**

Coordination between UNESCO and IZUM, as well as the Centre's reporting in general, could be enhanced by establishing a simple benchmark system in order to keep track of the progress obtained in meeting the major regional objectives of the Centre, along with other significant provisions from the renewed agreement. A number of key indicators and organizational development facts could be followed through a simple progress-reporting mechanism proactively followed by the Centre.

The Centre's reports examined during the evaluation are interesting and rich in details, however the progress reporting system used by IZUM should be also focused on indicators.

A revised structure of the report is also a good step towards a better M&E system which should track and assess the progress of IZUM in achieving its specific objectives. Although evaluations are useful and provide valuable insights - through monitoring, data is systematically collected and analyzed, tracking the institutional progress. Evaluation, on the other hand, makes use of this data to assess the institution's performance, and examines the results chain:

inputs/resources - activities - outputs/results - outcomes (short-term) - impact (long-term).

Since the Centre has not used yet a M&E structure (or a logical framework), or an indicator structure, there was no significant or specific data which could have been usable by this evaluation to measure impact (at national, regional or international levels).

Therefore, it is recommended that a new and improved M&E structure should be used from now on by IZUM, through planning a detailed framework for monitoring, evaluation (and learning - to enable continuity).

### 7.3. Formal recommendation on renewal of Category 2 status

Based on overwhelming convergent evidence from stakeholders, partners, staff and analysis of the available documentation, IZUM demonstrates high relevance, coherence and effectiveness, with **manageable risks tied to long-term financial sustainability of programs in partner countries**; harmonization of standards and human resources capacities between countries; and low technical risks (cybersecurity, system migration).

Renewal of IZUM's Category 2 status under the auspices of UNESCO is **recommended**, with emphasis for the next period on: institutional strengthening, strategic positioning and vision alignment with UNESCO, diversification of funding (EU and other foreseeable sources), and developing further partnerships and advocacy initiatives.

## Annex 1: Call for proposals

### Renewal Evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IRCAI and IZUM in Slovenia

#### Scope of Work

Under the overall authority of the Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information and the direct supervision of the program specialist, the contractor will be responsible for the following tasks:

**1. Evaluation of the Centre:**

- Conduct an independent assessment of the Centre's performance since its establishment.
- Provide UNESCO with a comprehensive review, enabling an informed recommendation on the possible renewal of the Centre's Category 2 status.

**2. Evaluation Approach:**

- Utilize both retrospective and prospective methodologies.
- Develop evidence-based, action-oriented recommendations, guided by questions related to relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, per UNESCO's standard evaluation criteria.
- Conduct a field visit to the Centre to gather comprehensive insights.

**3. Mixed Methodology:**

- Adopt a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative data sources.
- Employ multiple data collection methods, including desk study, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and a field mission.

**4. Parameters for Evaluation:**

The following parameters shall be considered by the independent experts contracted to undertake the renewal evaluation. The independent experts shall have had no prior affiliation with the institute or centre, and shall draft the renewal evaluation in English:

- the extent to which the institute or centre's objectives as set out in the agreement signed with UNESCO were achieved;
- the relevance of the contribution of the institute or centre's programs and activities to the achievement of UNESCO's prevailing Approved Program and Budget (C/5) at the time in which it was designated, including global strategies and action plans as well as sectoral program priorities, as defined in the agreement;
- the relevance of the contribution of the activities of the institute or centre to global development agendas;
- the quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO, both at Headquarters and in the field, as well as with National Commissions, other thematically-related category 1 and 2 institutes or centres with regard to planning and implementation of programs;
- the partnerships developed and maintained with government agencies, public or private partners and donors;

- the nature and efficiency of the institute or centre's governance, including organizational arrangements, management, human resources and accountability mechanisms;
- the financial resources available for ensuring sustainable institutional capacity and viability, and,
- the extent to which the institute or centre enjoys within its territory the autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and legal capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.
- the conclusions of the renewal evaluation shall be shared with the category 2 institute or centre and Member State(s) concerned and the report made available on the relevant Program Sectors website.

### **Deliverables**

The contractor will produce the following deliverables:

#### **1. Inception Report:**

- Overview of background, objectives, and refined key review questions.
- Detailed methodology and work plan.

#### **2. Draft Evaluation Report:**

- A preliminary report reflecting the application of the methodology, findings from a desk study, and discussions with stakeholders, including UNESCO, the Government of Slovenia, and the Centre. This entails a visit to Slovenia to meet with the relevant stakeholders working with IRCAI and IZUM. At least two members of the UNESCO secretariat should be interviewed for each report.

#### **3. Final Evaluation Report:**

- A final report (15-20 pages, excluding annexes) structured as follows:
  - Executive Summary (maximum 4 pages);
  - Purpose and Scope of the Review;
  - Methodology;
  - Findings;
  - Recommendations (including a formal recommendation on the Centre's Category 2 status); and
  - Annexes (including terms of reference, key documents consulted, list of interviews, etc.).
- Draft agreement for the renewal based on the template provided by UNESCO

More details on the evaluation criteria are available in the UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Centres at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371433>

### **Timeline**

The evaluation must be completed by **30 September 2025**, with the final report presented no later than **15 November 2025**.

We kindly request you to provide:

1. Your company's / organization's profile, which should include any relevant experience and references related to similar projects. Please provide the CVs of the individual(s) who will conduct the evaluation.



Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

2. A technical proposal with the methodology for conducting the evaluation. Max 2 pages.
3. A financial proposal with the overall amount in United States Dollars (including the cost of your travel and stay for your evaluation visit to the two centres). The visit to the two centres can be combined in one trip.

We look forward to receiving your quotation by **12 May 2025**. Should you require any further information, please feel free to contact us at: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex 2: Interview guides

### Overall interview guide (field research)

1. Please describe your position at the institution and your responsibilities with relevance to the Centre.
2. Why does IZUM need to be a UNESCO Category 2 Centre?
3. Please describe the Centre's contribution to UNESCO's approved programme and budget (C/5), including global strategies and action plans (as defined in the agreement).
4. How does the institute:
  - contribute in order to meet UNESCO's regional objectives and sectoral/intersectoral priorities;
  - contribute to the global development agenda, i.e. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related SDGs?
5. Please describe the interaction and coordination between:
  - the Centre and UNESCO;
  - the Centre, government agencies, public/private partners/donors.
6. Please describe, from your own perspective, the following organizational elements of the Centre:
  - autonomy and legal capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property;
  - governance, management (including HR), and accountability mechanisms;
  - recruitment policies and measuring staff performance;
  - financial resources and sustainability.
7. What significant changes in the structure and functioning of the Centre have been implemented in the last 5 years?
8. What are the main obstacles and opportunities in your daily work?
9. Please describe how the Centre is providing training and career opportunities.

### Overall online interview guide (UNESCO / partners)

1. Please describe your position at UNESCO HQ/office and your responsibilities with relevance to IZUM.
2. What were your expectations concerning the institute's contribution to meet UNESCO's regional objectives and sectoral/intersectoral priorities?
3. How would you describe the performance of the institute as compared to these expectations?
4. What was the specific assistance provided by UNESCO to the Centre?
5. Please describe your interaction with the Centre and its projects as concerns:
  - planning and coordination;
  - communication;
  - implementation of programs;
  - cooperation with other UNESCO institutes and the academic community;
  - cooperation with the Slovenian government.



Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

6. In your opinion, what is the most important role that the Centre played at regional and/or international levels? What difference did the institute make within the UNESCO network and scientific community?
7. What are your expectations if the renewal of the Centre's status as a Category 2 Centre is approved? How do you see the next step(s) which should be further taken by the Centre?
8. How do you see UNESCO's future role in the next phase of cooperation with the Centre?

## Annex 3: Field mission agenda

### Monday: 15 September, 2025

09:30 - 10:45	Kick-off meeting with IZUM management and key staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- presentation of the review</li> <li>- presentation of the institute</li> <li>- discussion and clarify other documentation needs</li> </ul>	<b>Dr. Aleš Bošnjak</b> , Director <b>Mag. Davor Bračko</b> , COBISS.net network coordinator <b>Mateja Gradič</b> , Head of Corporate Services
10:45 - 11:00	Coffee break	
11:00 - 13:00	Individual interviews: IZUM management	<b>Dr. Aleš Bošnjak</b> , Director <b>Mateja Gradič</b> , Head of Corporate Services
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break	
14:00 - 14:30	Short visit of the institute HQ and facilities	<b>Mag. Davor Bračko</b> , COBISS.net network coordinator
14:30 - 15:30	Individual interview: IZUM management	<b>Mag. Davor Bračko</b> , COBISS.net network coordinator
15:30 - 15:45	Coffee break	
15:45 - 16:00	Debriefing meeting with IZUM management and key staff	<b>Dr. Aleš Bošnjak</b> , Director <b>Mag. Davor Bračko</b> , COBISS.net network coordinator

### Tuesday: 16 September, 2025

09:30 - 11:00	Group interview: key IZUM staff	<b>Mag. Bojan Štok</b> , Head of Software Development <b>Marko Belej</b> , Head of COBISS plus <b>Lidija Curk</b> , Head of Bibliographies <b>Janita Tacer Slana</b> , Head of COBISS applications <b>Andrej Korošec</b> , Head of SICRIS
11:00 - 11:15	Coffee break	
11:15 - 12:45	Individual interview: key IZUM staff	<b>Romana Muhvič Šumandl</b> , Head of Service Management <b>Boštjan Batič</b> , Head of PR, Training and Documentation Department
12:45 - 14:00	Lunch break	
14:00 - 14:30	Debriefing meeting with IZUM management & key staff	<b>Dr. Aleš Bošnjak</b> , Director <b>Mag. Davor Bračko</b> , COBISS.net network coordinator

### Wednesday: 17 September, 2025

09:30 - 11:00	Group interview: key IZUM staff	<b>Gorazd Taciga</b> , Head of Computer Systems Support
---------------	---------------------------------	---

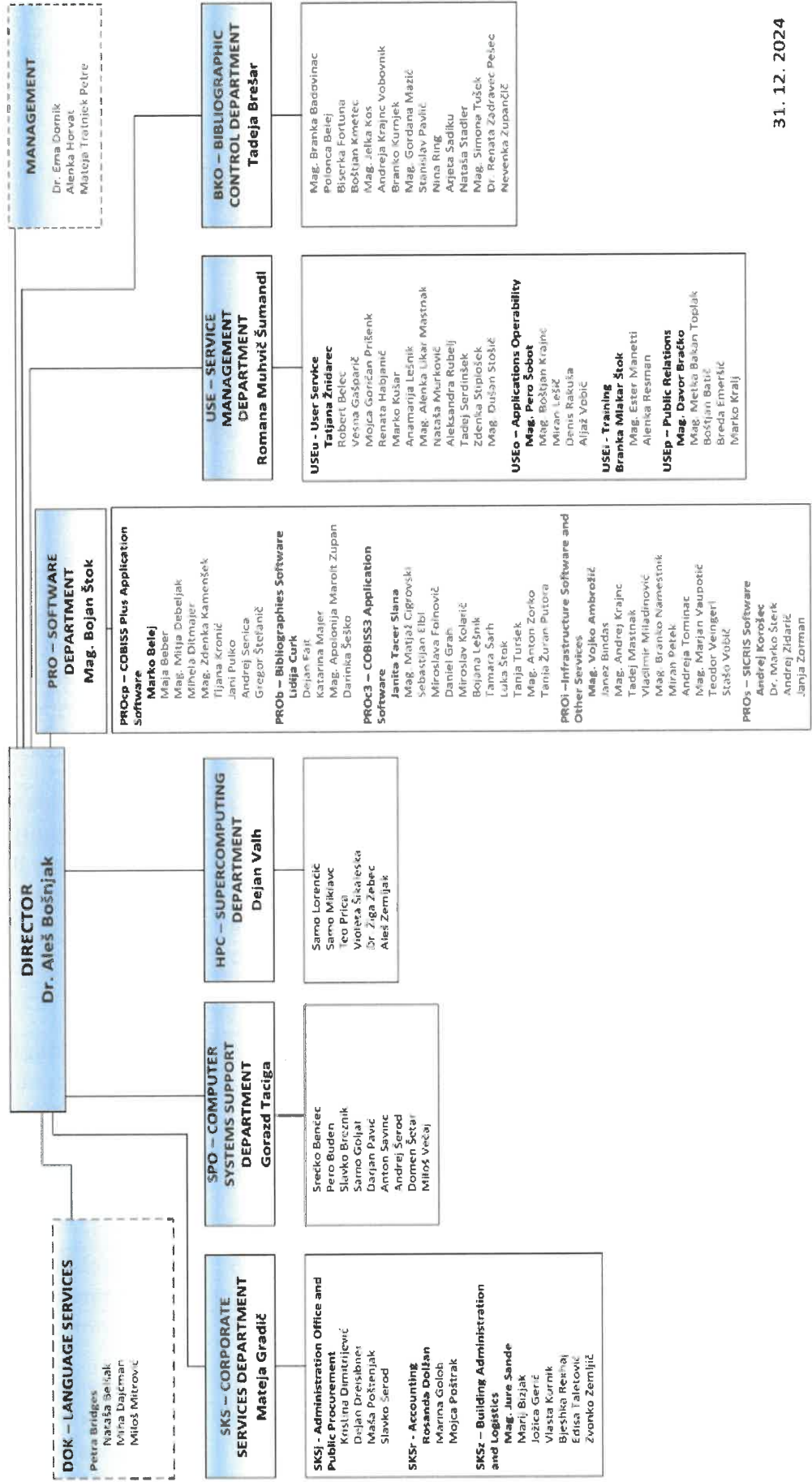


Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

		<b>Srečko Benčec</b> , Computer Systems Support <b>Domen Šetar</b> , Computer Systems Support
11:00 - 11:15	Coffee break	
11:15 - 12:00	Individual interview: key IZUM staff	<b>Tadeja Brešar</b> , Head of Bibliographic Control
12:00 - 13:00	Final clarification / debriefing meeting with IZUM management & key staff	<b>Dr. Aleš Bošnjak</b> , Director <b>Mag. Davor Bračko</b> , COBISS.net network coordinator

## Annex 4: Personnel structure of IZUM



## Annex 5: Documents reviewed

CATEGORY	DOCUMENT TITLE	YEAR	NOTES
Legal & foundational	Agreement between UNESCO and the Republic of Slovenia on the establishment of IZUM	2012	Signed: 18 September 2012.
	Ratification of IZUM	2020	Ratified: 9 July 2020.
Strategic & planning	COBISS Action Plan 2024-2028	2024	
	Minutes and working documents: COBISS.net meetings	2016-2025	Online and offline.
	Technical support overview	2013-2025	-
	Slovenian Artificial Intelligence Factory	2025	Cooperation with IRCAI under the EPICURE project, co-funded by EuroHPC and the EC.
Financial	Financial reports	2013-2024	Operating revenues and expenditures.
	Internal audit report	2024	-
Activity	Annual progress reports	2013-2024	Activities within the framework of UNESCO category II centre operation.
	List of institute staff	2024	Structure of the institute.
	List of key publications	2025	-
	List of donors and partners	2025	-
	List of COBISS conferences	2014-2023	International COBISS conferences and user meetings of the COBISS.net network.
Evaluation framework	Scope of Work - Call for Proposals (C2C Renewal Evaluation)	2025	ToR for evaluation.
	Strategicus Consulting Proposal	2025	Technical & financial proposal.
	UNESCO Contract 4500541221	2025	Contract with evaluators.
	IZUM presentation	2025	Main evidence base.
	Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres	2019	Sets evaluation framework, governance rules, and renewal requirements.



Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

CATEGORY	DOCUMENT TITLE	YEAR	NOTES
	under the auspices of UNESCO		
	UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy	2022 -2029	Outlines UNESCO's strategic objectives, including digital transformation, ethics of science & technology, education for sustainable development.
	UNESCO Approved Program and Budget	2024 -2025	Specifies program priorities and results; basis for assessing alignment of IZUM activities with UNESCO priorities.
	UNESCO Strategy on Technology-enabled Learning		Provides policy guidance on digital learning, AI in education.

## Annex 6: List of interviews

NAME	POSITION / ROLE	INSTITUTION
Dr. Aleš Bošnjak	Director	IZUM
Mag. Davor Bračko	Network coordinator	IZUM / COBISS.net
Mateja Gradič	Head of Corporate Services	IZUM
Mag. Bojan Štok	Head of COBISS plus	IZUM / COBISS.net
Lidija Curk	Head of Bibliographies	IZUM
Janita Tacer Slana	Head of COBISS applications	IZUM / COBISS.net
Andrej Korošec	Head of SICRIS	IZUM
Romana Muhvič Šumandl	Head of Service Management	IZUM
Boštjan Batič	Head of PR, Training and Documentation	IZUM
Gorazd Taciga	Head of Computer Systems Support	IZUM
Srečko Benčec	Computer Systems Support	IZUM
Domen Šetar	Computer Systems Support	IZUM
Tadeja Brešar	Head of Bibliographic Control	IZUM
Tamara Butigan Vučaj	COBISS Council President	National Library of Serbia
Guilherme Canela De Souza Godoi	Director, Division for Digital Inclusion, Policies and Digital Transformation	UNESCO
Dr. Xianhong Hu	Program Specialist, Division for Digital Inclusion, Policies and Digital Transformation	UNESCO
Dr. Bhanu Neupane	Senior Program Officer	UNESCO
Gašper Hrastelj	Secretary-General	Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO
Dr. Jure Gašparič	State Secretary	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Republic of Slovenia
Peter Volasko	Senior Secretary Science Directorate, Science Division	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Republic of Slovenia
Klaudija Koražija	Head of European Affairs and International Cooperation Service	Ministry of Digital Transformation, Republic of Slovenia
Veronika Stabej	Ambassador	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Republic of Slovenia

## Annex 7: Draft renewal agreement

**TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO), THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA, AND THE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION SCIENCE (IZUM), REGARDING THE RENEWAL OF IZUM - REGIONAL CENTRE FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND CURRENT RESEARCH INFORMATION SYSTEMS, MARIBOR, SLOVENIA AS A CATEGORY 2 INSTITUTE OR CENTRE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO**

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia,  
and  
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,  
and  
The Institute of Information Science (IZUM),

*Having regard* to the resolution whereby the UNESCO General Conference seeks to favour international cooperation in respect of universal access to information and digital inclusion,

*Recalling* Decision [...], by which the Executive Board decided to renew the designation of the IZUM - Regional Centre for Library Information Systems and Current Research Information Systems as a Category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO and authorized the Director-General to sign the corresponding Agreement,

*Desirous* of defining the terms and conditions governing the framework for cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, the Institute of Information Science (IZUM), and UNESCO that shall be granted to the said centre in this Agreement,

**HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:**

**Article 1 - Definitions**

- a. "UNESCO" refers to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- b. "Government" refers to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.
- c. "Centre" refers to IZUM - Regional Centre for Library Information Systems and Current Research Information Systems.
- d. "Parties" refers to UNESCO, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Institute of Information Science (IZUM).

**Article 2 - Operation**

The Government and the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) shall agree to take any



## Renewal evaluation of UNESCO Category 2 Centres: IZUM in Slovenia

---

measures that may be required for the continued operation of IZUM - Regional Centre for Library Information Systems and Current Research Information Systems as a Category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO, as provided for under this Agreement.

### **Article 3 - Purpose of the Agreement**

The purpose of this Agreement is to define the terms and conditions governing collaboration between UNESCO, the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) and the Government regarding the IZUM - Regional Centre for Library Information Systems and Current Research Information Systems as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO and also the rights and obligations stemming therefrom for the parties.

### **Article 4 - Legal status**

- a. The centre shall be independent of UNESCO.
- b. The Government and the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) shall ensure that the centre enjoys within its territory the autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and has the legal capacity to:
  - i. contract;
  - ii. institute legal proceedings;
  - iii. acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

### **Article 5 - Constitutive Act**

The Government and the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) shall ensure that the Constitutive Act of the centre include provisions describing precisely:

- a. the legal status granted to the centre, within the national legal system, the legal capacity necessary to exercise its functions and to receive funds, obtain payments for services rendered, and acquire all means necessary for its functioning;
- b. a governing structure for the centre allowing UNESCO representation within its Governing Board.

### **Article 6 - Objectives and Functions**

The objectives and functions of the centre shall be to:

- a. coordination of the development and operation of the shared bibliographic system and services;
- b. coordination of the development and application of standards for computer support to meet the requirements of the shared bibliographic system and services;

- c. software development and maintenance to meet the requirements of the shared bibliographic system and services;
- d. determination of the suitability of library staff for shared cataloguing purposes, in co-operation with the National Libraries of the countries participating in COBISS.net;
- e. planning and maintenance of the central computer and communications capacity to enable the functioning of the system;
- f. management of the offer of databases on electronic data carriers, with direct access by agreement with their producers;
- g. organization of professional training and counselling in the fields covered by the shared bibliographic system;
- h. coordination of the information system for monitoring research activities in the different COBISS.net countries;
- i. participation in public programs for the development of COBISS.net as a means for developing knowledge societies in the region;
- j. engineering for the development and maintenance of a computer and communications infrastructure in educational, research and cultural organizations;
- k. research, development and counselling in its field of work.

#### **Article 7 - Governing Board**

- a. The centre shall be guided and overseen by a Governing Board (or comparable body), renewed every four years, and include:
  - i. representative(s) of the Government concerned or his/her appointed representative(s);
  - ii. representatives of Member State(s) and or Associate Member State(s), which have sent to the centre notification for membership, in accordance with the stipulations of Article 12.b and have expressed interest in being represented on the Board;
  - iii. a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO.
- b. The Governing Board shall:
  - i. approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of the centre;

- ii. approve the annual work plan and budget of the centre, including the staffing table;
  - iii. examine the annual and evaluation reports submitted by the Director of the centre, including reports of the centre's contribution to UNESCO's approved programme and budget (C/5), global strategies and action plans as well as sectoral programme priorities, and develop response strategies for strengthening such contribution;
  - iv. examine the periodic independent audit reports of the financial statements of the centre and monitor the provision of such accounting records necessary for the preparation of financial statements;
  - v. adopt the rules and regulations and determine the financial, administrative and personnel management procedures for the centre in accordance with the laws of the country;
  - vi. decide on the participation of regional intergovernmental organizations and international organizations in the work of the centre.
- c. The Governing Board shall meet in ordinary session at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year; it shall meet in extraordinary session if convened by its Chairperson, either on his/her own initiative or at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO or of a majority of its members.
- d. The Governing Board shall adopt its own rules of procedure. For its first meeting the procedure shall be established by the Government and UNESCO.

#### **Article 8 - Contribution by the Government**

The Government shall contribute to the IZUM - Regional Centre for Library Information Systems and Current Research Information Systems the amount of [...USD or other currency] per year for a period of eight years, for the administration and proper functioning of the centre.

#### **Article 9 - Contribution by the Institute of Information Science (IZUM)**

The Institute of Information Science (IZUM) shall:

- a. assume all costs related to the maintenance of the premises, equipment, facilities, utilities and communications;
- b. provide, in cooperation with the Government, all necessary financial resources, as well as the staff necessary, for performance of its functions as a Category 2 institute/ centre



#### **Article 10 - Financial Contribution to UNESCO**

With a view to recovering costs incurred by UNESCO in administering, monitoring, reporting and other operational processes vis-à-vis Category 2 institutes and centres, the Government/ centre shall make an annual contribution to the corresponding UNESCO Programme Sector equivalent to at least US \$1,000 by 31 December of every year.

#### **Article 11 - UNESCO's Contribution**

- a. UNESCO may provide technical assistance, as needed, for the actions of the centre, in accordance with UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget (C/5), including global strategies and action plans, as well as sectoral programme priorities by:
  - i. providing the assistance of its experts in the specialized fields of the centre;
  - ii. engaging in temporary staff exchanges when appropriate, whereby the staff concerned will remain on the payroll of the dispatching organizations; and
  - iii. seconding members of its staff temporarily, as may be decided by the Director-General on an exceptional basis if justified by the implementation of a joint activity or project within a strategic programme priority area.
- b. In all the cases listed above, such assistance shall not be undertaken except within the provisions of UNESCO's Programme and Budget, and UNESCO will provide Member States with accounts relating to the use of its staff and associated costs.

#### **Article 12 - Participation**

- a. The centre shall encourage the participation of Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO which, by their common interest in the objectives of the centre, desire to cooperate with the centre.
- b. Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO wishing to participate in the centre's activities and to be represented on the Governing Board as a member, as provided for under this Agreement, shall send to the centre notification to this effect. The director shall inform the parties to the agreement and other participating Member States of the receipt of such notifications.

#### **Article 13 - Responsibility**

As the centre is legally separate from UNESCO, the latter shall not be legally responsible for the acts or omissions of the centre, and shall also not be subject to any legal process, and/or bear no liabilities of any kind, be they financial or otherwise, with the exception of the provisions expressly laid down in this Agreement.

#### **Article 14 - Evaluation**

- a. UNESCO may, at any time, carry out an evaluation of the activities of the centre to be funded by the centre or the Member State(s) concerned in order to ascertain whether:
  - i. the centre makes a significant contribution to UNESCO's prevailing Approved Programme and Budget (C/5) at the time in which it was designated, including global strategies and action plans as well as sectoral programme priorities;
  - ii. the activities effectively pursued by the centre are in conformity with those set out in this Agreement.
- b. UNESCO shall, for the purpose of the renewal of this Agreement, conduct an evaluation of the contribution of the Category 2 centre to UNESCO's prevailing Approved Programme and Budget (C/5) at the time in which it was designated, including global strategies and action plans, as well as sectoral programme priorities, and other parameters outlined in paragraph E.2 (i) (d) of the 2019 Strategy for Category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO. This evaluation, managed by UNESCO, shall be financed entirely by the Government and Institute of Information Science (IZUM).
- c. UNESCO undertakes to submit the conclusions of the renewal evaluation to the centre and Member State(s) concerned and to make available the renewal evaluation report on the relevant Programme Sector(s)' website.
- d. Following the conclusions of a renewal evaluation, each of the parties shall have the option of requesting a revision of the contents of the Agreement or of denouncing the Agreement, as envisaged in Articles 18 and 19.

#### **Article 15 - Use of UNESCO's name and logo**

- a. The centre may mention its affiliation with UNESCO. It may therefore use after its title the mention "under the auspices of UNESCO".
- b. The centre is authorized to use the UNESCO logo or a version thereof on its letterheaded paper and documents including electronic documents and websites in accordance with the conditions established by the governing bodies of UNESCO.
- c. Use of UNESCO's name and logo including in the name, on letterheaded paper and documents, including electronic documents and websites of Institute of Information Science (IZUM) are strictly prohibited in the absence of a valid agreement with UNESCO.

#### **Article 16 - Entry into force**

This Agreement shall enter into force upon its signature by the parties.



**Article 17 - Duration**

This Agreement is concluded for a period of eight years as from its entry into force. The Agreement may be renewed or terminated by the Executive Board following a recommendation of the Director-General.

**Article 18 - Denunciation**

- a. Each of the parties shall be entitled to denounce this Agreement unilaterally.
- b. The denunciation shall take effect within sixty (60) days following receipt of the notification sent by one of the contracting parties to the other.

**Article 19 - Revision**

This Agreement may be revised by written consent between the Government, Institute of Information Science (IZUM), and UNESCO, further to, and taking into account the recommendations of a renewal evaluation.

**Article 20 - Settlement of disputes**

Any dispute arising from this Agreement shall be settled by mutual understanding of the Parties. In the absence of an amicable settlement, the dispute shall be referred to arbitration in accordance with the UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) Arbitration Rules

**Article 21 - Privileges and immunities**

Nothing in or relating to the present Agreement shall be deemed a waiver of any of the privileges and immunities of UNESCO

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned have signed this Agreement,

DONE in three copies in English (and other language), on [...] In case of discrepancies between these versions, the English text shall prevail

.....  
For the  
Institute of Information  
Science (IZUM)

.....  
For the United Nations  
Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural  
Organization

.....  
For the Government

## Annex 8: Partners and cooperating bodies and organizations

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>PARTNER / NETWORK</b>
UN & Intergovernmental Organizations	UNESCO HQ (Education, Ethics, CI, Science)
National Governments & Public Bodies	Ministry of Education
	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
	Ministry of Digital Transformation
	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
National COBISS Centres	National Library of Serbia
	National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina
	National and University Library of the Republika Srpska
	National Library of Montenegro "Đurđe Crnojević"
	National and University Library "St. Kliment of Ohrid", North Macedonia
	"St. Cyril and Methodius" National Library, Bulgaria
Academy of Sciences, Albania	