

Summary of the ZRS Koper STRATEGY 2025–2030

A Hub of Mediterranean Wisdom

A decorative graphic consisting of numerous thin, white, wavy lines that flow across the bottom half of the page, creating a sense of movement and depth.

As the environment
in which we live and work—
one we explore and examine—
is ever changing,
so too is the knowledge
required to understand it.

*Prof Dr Rado Pišot,
Director of ZRS Koper*

Introduction and Background

The Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper) is a multidisciplinary public research institution that integrates the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, with a particular focus on the Mediterranean and the Upper Adriatic region. Established in 1994, it has operated as an independent public research institution since 2016. Initially, it pursued the objective of establishing a third intellectual axis in Slovenia and providing the foundation for the creation of the University of Primorska. This objective has since been achieved and surpassed; from 2003 to 2016, the ZRS Koper operated as a member of the University, and by the end of 2016 it had regained its independence.

The Strategy for the 2025–2030 five-year period was formulated on the basis of thorough preparatory work, including an internal evaluation in 2020, an external evaluation in 2022, and in-depth analyses of operations over the past five years. The document was prepared by a diverse working group comprising ZRS Koper management, heads of institutes, Scientific Council and Management Board members, and other expert staff.

Over the past five years, ZRS Koper has achieved outstanding results. The number of employees has doubled, acquired funding has nearly tripled and average annual revenue growth has reached 19.6%, rising to 28.8% in 2023. The share of revenue obtained from sources other than the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency exceeds 30%. The Science and Research Centre (ZRS) Koper operated with a surplus throughout the entire five-year period. To mark its 30th anniversary, ZRS Koper was awarded the Order of Merit by the President of the Republic of Slovenia in recognition of its outstanding achievements in science and its contribution to strengthening the country's international reputation.

The 2025–2030 Strategy is based on:

Internal evaluation (2020).

- External evaluation (2022).
- In-depth analyses of the past five-year period.
- Contributions from a broad working group (management, institute heads, Scientific Council, Management Board).

Key achievements of the previous period:

- Doubling of staff numbers.
- Nearly threefold increase in funding.
- Average annual revenue growth of 19.6% (28.8% in 2023).
- Over 30% of revenue from non-ARIS sources.
- Continuous surplus over five years (> €1.1 million total).
- 70% of funds allocated to research staff.
- Development of research infrastructure (premises, laboratories, equipment).

A significant milestone

On 1 December 2024, ZRS Koper celebrated 30 years of its scientific and research work, marked by an in-depth evaluation of its contribution to the society at the local, national, and international levels. Reflecting on past achievements and maintaining high standards of performance and social responsibility provide the foundation for future development, a vision shared by the leadership and the staff alike. On this occasion, the ZRS Koper was awarded with the Order of Merit of the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

On the occasion of its 30th anniversary, the Science and Research Centre Koper received a decoration from the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Nataša Pirc Musar—the Order of Merit—for outstanding achievements in science, cooperation with local communities, the economy, and international partners, and for strengthening the reputation of the Republic of Slovenia in the fields of science, education, and the economy.

With this recognition, the Science and Research Centre Koper has reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining standards of excellence in research, contributing to the well-being of the community, and consolidating its role as a hub of Mediterranean wisdom.



Mission, Values and Vision

Mission

‘A MEDITERRANEAN CENTRE OF SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE’

ZRS Koper's mission is to serve as a Mediterranean centre of scientific excellence. As a reference hub for research activities in the fields covered by its institutes, ZRS Koper fosters a stimulating environment for researchers and contributes to the well-being of modern society through its findings.

CREATIVITY

Generating new ideas and advancing the boundaries of knowledge

RESPONSIBILITY

Acting with ethical and moral integrity and ensuring the credibility of research

OPENNESS

Embracing diversity and the principles of open science

INCLUSIVENESS

Fostering an environment of respect and belonging

COMMITMENT

Ensuring security, well-being, and loyalty within the organisation

In pursuing its mission, the organisation adheres to five core values in all areas of its work, from its internal structure and operations to its interactions with its immediate and broader environment. Creativity is defined as the process of generating new ideas that lay the foundations for new knowledge and expand the boundaries of what is possible. Responsibility encompasses the ethical and moral dimensions of work, as well as the integrity and validity of knowledge. Openness refers to the ability to operate beyond individual frameworks and embrace the diversity of ideas and approaches inherent in open science. Inclusiveness involves creating an environment in which everyone feels welcome, respected and valued. Belonging is recognised as a fundamental human need for security, and a key factor in fostering happiness, well-being and loyalty.

Vision

“A HUB OF MEDITERRANEAN WISDOM”

ZRS Koper's vision is to become an internationally recognised centre of research excellence that contributes to the preservation and shaping of the Mediterranean region's identity, while addressing the challenges of the local and global environment . The institution aims to attract both outstanding early-career researchers and established scholars by providing high-quality research infrastructure, a stimulating working environment, and researcher-oriented support services.

Strategic Concept 2025–2030

In the 2025–2030 strategic period, ZRS Koper will pursue **six key strategic objectives**:

Achieving stable revenue growth and a balanced funding structure

ZRS Koper aims to achieve stable and balanced revenue growth alongside an appropriate funding structure. The aim is to reduce reliance on individual funding sources and increase the proportion of income derived from alternative sources that are not exclusively linked to the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS). This will ensure long-term financial sustainability and resilience in the event of changes to the research funding system.

Enhancing the scope and quality of research output and commitment to open science

The institute will increase the volume, and above all the quality of its research output, while consistently adhering to the principles of open science. This includes increasing the number of scientific publications, enhancing their quality and impact, and ensuring open access to research results and data.

Strengthening knowledge transfer, innovation, and public engagement

The institute will strengthen the transfer of knowledge and research results into practice and encourage public engagement in research processes. The aim is to increase the number of projects with industry and the local community, develop patents, make contributions to the field of social innovation and expand citizen science initiatives.

Expanding collaboration with academic, local, and international partners

The institute will strengthen its collaboration with domestic and international academic institutions, local communities and international organisations. The aim is to increase the number of joint research projects and enhance integration into European and global research networks.

Developing high-quality research infrastructure

the institute will expand and improve the scale and quality of its research infrastructure, which forms an essential foundation for developing and advancing scientific research. The aim is to provide modern facilities and equipment in laboratories that support high-quality research and respond effectively to the evolving needs of researchers.

Investing in the growth and development of research and professional staff

the institute will invest in the steady growth and development of its staff, recognising that a highly qualified workforce is key to sustained progress and success. Its objective is to ensure an optimal number and structure of employees, foster their professional development, and create opportunities for international mobility and career advancement.

Strategic objectives define what ZRS Koper aims to achieve in these areas.

Strategic Orientations

The principles it follows are its strategic directions.

INNOVATION

Innovation is inextricably linked to creativity. To be efficient and successful, an organisation must be creative and innovative. This involves developing better products, pursuing more original concepts and models, continuously improving technology and updating knowledge. Ongoing change is a prerequisite for competitiveness in the market. When developing ideas, it is important to move beyond existing conditions and external frameworks as much as possible and focus on the future, which will be shaped by our actions and the realisation of our ideas.

DIGITALISATION

Digitalisation and digital transformation represent the present and future of modern organisations. They must therefore be embedded in all our activities, from competitive research approaches and selected research content to knowledge transfer and the development of knowledge, both within the organisation and in our interactions with the wider world. Digitalisation is a distinctly cross-sectoral and transversal strategic orientation that influences all strategic pillars and enables future development.

ATTRACTIVENESS (CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE)

When considering strategic projects for implementing the strategy, it is essential to consider who may benefit from the generated knowledge, and how we will actively involve interested stakeholders in our research activities. This orientation is primarily aimed at developing models and concepts for knowledge and research transfer, open science and their application in the immediate and wider environment, as well as communicating the achievements of ZRS Koper researchers.

INNOVATION / OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING

Development strategies and projects must be guided by 'outside-the-box' thinking. When developing ideas, it is important to move beyond existing conditions and external constraints and focus on the future, which depends on our actions and the realisation of our ideas. We must encourage bold thinking that transcends conventional frameworks to generate the new, original and unconventional ideas and breakthroughs that the world needs.

EFFICIENCY

Every strategy, project, activity or initiative must contribute to the greater efficiency of ZRS Koper at all levels of its operations. This means continuously assessing whether our efforts deliver the desired results, and whether the resources invested correspond to the outcomes achieved. Efficiency is a key measure of organisational performance and a prerequisite for long-term sustainability.

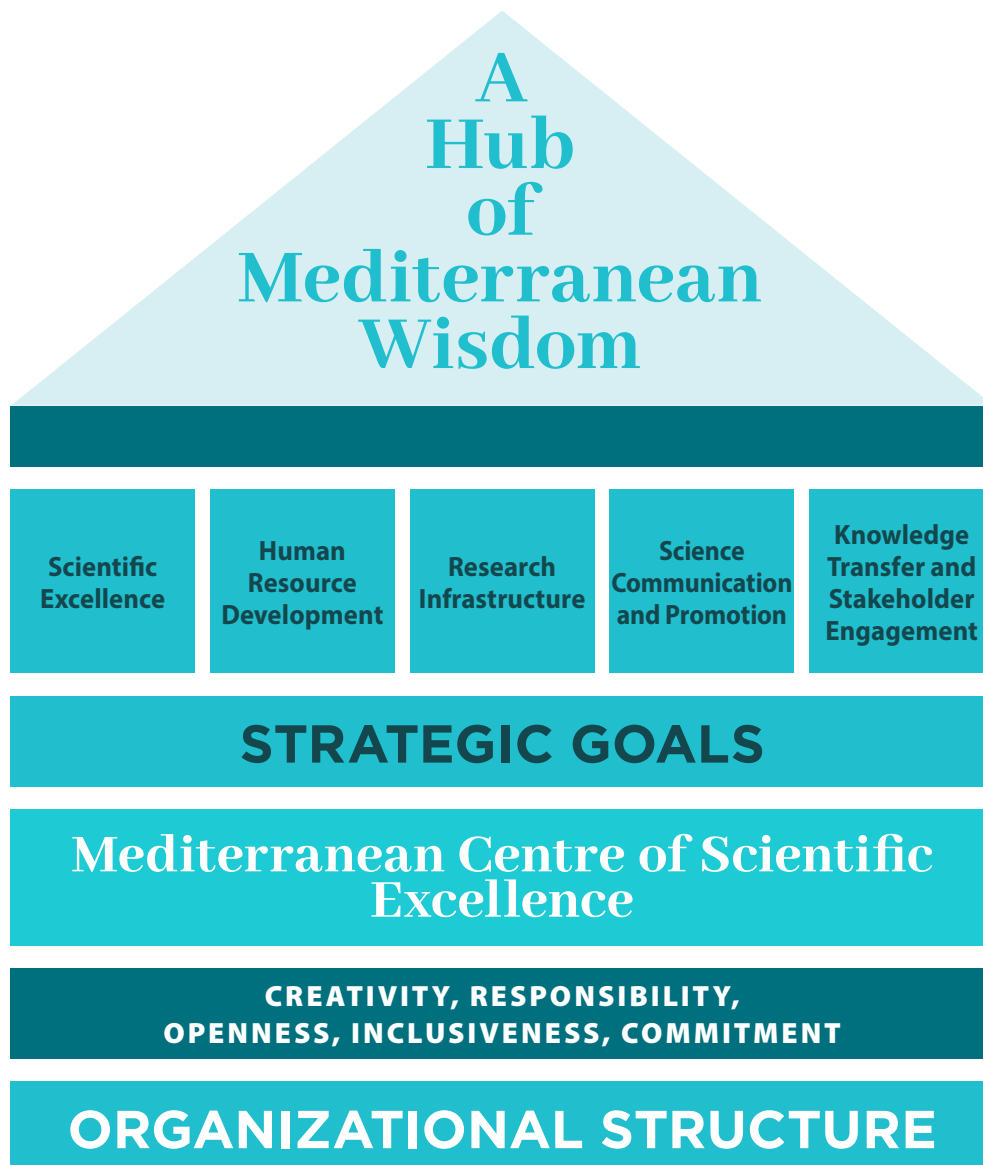
All strategic orientations derive from the core values of ZRS Koper, are interconnected, and are mutually reinforcing. Together, they form the framework within which all of the institution's projects, activities and initiatives will be developed in the upcoming strategic period.

SWOT Analysis – Key Findings

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate staff number and structure • High-quality research programmes and projects • Strong infrastructure in certain units • Revenue growth and sound expenditure structure • International visibility • In-house publishing and library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear organisational structure • Insufficient monitoring and control systems • Weak incentive and reward system • Low share of early-career researchers • Limited cooperation with industry • Lack of innovation and patents • Weak knowledge transfer into study programmes
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the EMUNI network • New legislation regarding research activity (ZRID). • Strong international integration • Reputation and recognition • National and international partnership networks • Integration into educational processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential reduction in research funding • Political instability • Limited financial competitiveness • Imbalances between institutes • Significant dependence on a single funding source

The strategic framework is built on **five pillars**.

Strategic Pillars and Measures



Scientific Excellence

Specific objectives and indicators:

- 10% annual increase in the number of scientific publications.
- 5% annual growth in above-average scientific performance (A" points).
- 5% annual growth in Scopus/WoS publications.
- 5% annual growth in net citations.
- Increase open access publications to 90% by 2030.
- 2–3 patents, licences and innovations within 5 years.
- The establishment of a local server environment for open science.

Strategic measures

- Upgrading the performance reward system.
- Developing a culture oriented towards excellence.
- Supporting interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Promoting workforce diversity.
- Establishing a modern system for evaluating achievements.
- Further development of information tools.
- Adherence to the principles of open science.
- Creating a platform to connect the scientific potential of the Mediterranean region.

Specific objectives and indicators:

- Increase the number of professional training sessions by 20% within 5 years.
- Increase the number of international research stays by 15% within 5 years.
- Increase the number of top-level visiting international researchers.
- Increase the number of early-stage researchers by 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) per year.
- Monitor career progression.

Human Resource Development

Strategic measures

- Aligning evaluation with EU Council conclusions.
- Promoting international mobility.
- Creation of a clear organisational structure.
- Improving systemic support for research visits.
- Enhancing internal communication.
- Developing an in-house system for attracting early-career researchers.
- Implementation of the Gender Equality Plan.

Research Infrastructure

Specific objectives and indicators:

- Increase in square meterage of new workspaces and laboratories.
- Increase in square meterage of open areas.
- Modernisation of personal and communication equipment.
- Increase in high-quality laboratory equipment.
- Participation in ESFRI projects.

Strategic measures

- Analysis of infrastructure needs.
- Implementation of ongoing infrastructure projects (Plavje centre, De Belli Palace renovation, establishment of facilities on Pristaniška Street).
- Establishment of new infrastructure projects.
- Conducting applied research and field experiments.
- Promotion of sustainable and energy-efficient infrastructure.
- Securing national and European funding.
- Striving for membership of ESFRI projects.

Key highlights:

- Professionalisation of the science communication service.
- Establishment of a new visual identity and slogan.
- Active presence on social media (including LinkedIn).
- Organisation of promotional events with leading international scientists.
- Differentiation of PR promotion from science communication.

Science Communication and Promotion

Strategic measures

- A clear distinction between knowledge transfer, science communication and citizen science.
- Gradual professionalisation of science communication.
- Implementation of an annual communication strategy.
- Website and video library upgrade.
- Systematic promotion of scientific achievements.
- Media training.

Knowledge Transfer and Stakeholder Engagement

Specific objectives and indicators:

- Increase market projects with the local community by 10% annually.
- Increase market projects with the economy/industry by 10% annually.
- Establish connections with at least three new research networks annually.
- Increase citizen science projects.

Strategic measures

- Development of a knowledge transfer evaluation system.
- Understanding target groups and stakeholders.
- Analysis of the environment's service needs.
- Service catalogue and marketing upgrade.
- Involvement in student mentoring.
- Collaboration with EMUNI on postgraduate programmes.
- Establishment of spin-off companies.

The strategy includes three key supporting documents:

- The Office for Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT Office).
- The Public Service Programme in Olive Growing (2026–2028).
- The Communication Strategy 2025–2030.

Office for Knowledge and Technology Transfer (OKTT)

Established on 16 February 2024 within the Centre for Project Management.

Mission: To evaluate and promote the transfer of knowledge, best practices, research results, and innovations to the market, while strengthening collaboration between ZRS Koper and direct knowledge users.

Vision: To serve as the central, indispensable link between researchers and knowledge users.

Key focus areas:

- Identification and protection of intellectual property,
- Transfer of knowledge to the market and direct users,
- Management, protection, and marketing of intellectual property rights,
- Support and advisory services for the establishment of spin-off companies.

Public Service Programme in Olive Growing (2026–2028)

Fields of activity:

- Introduction and breeding of olive varieties.
- Technologies in conventional, integrated, and organic farming.
- Monitoring of ripening processes.
- Monitoring of harvest yield and olive oil quality.
- Assessing the impact of new processing technologies.

Key activities:

- Maintenance of the collection orchard (189 varieties).
- Testing of new varieties.
- Monitoring of fruit set and disease susceptibility.
- Analysis of oil yield and oil quality.
- Knowledge transfer to growers and advisors.

Communication Strategy 2025–2030

Identified challenges:

- Undefined clear role of the public relations unit.
- Inadequate work organisation across units.
- Irregular reporting on activities.
- Fragmented implementation of PR activities.

Proposed solutions:

- Internal workshops and campaigns
- Clear cooperation procedures
- Centralisation of reporting
- Appointment of contact persons within units

New organisational structure:

The Public Relations Unit will be relocated under the Director’s Office and will include:

- Head of Public Relations,
- Public Relations Specialist,
- Digital Communication Specialist,
- Public Relations Assistant,
- Science Communication Officer.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of media mentions (5% annual increase).
- Reach of publications (5% annual increase).
- Share of positive coverage (target: 70%).
- 4 major media campaigns per year.
- 5% annual growth in brand recognition.

New visual identity:

- Retained nautilus symbol (spiral shell as a symbol of exploration).
- Updated colour palette (turquoise – wisdom, incisiveness, transparency).

Slogan: “The Hub of Mediterranean Wisdom”

Three logo versions (primary, secondary, tertiary) for different applications.
A brand manual for ZRS Koper’s CGP has been prepared.

The ZRS Koper 2025–2030 Strategy is conceived as a living document, to be continuously adapted to changes in the environment and the dynamics of its staff. Its implementation will be based on action plans from the institutes and organisational units, integrated into a cohesive research centre, which will operationalise the strategic measures.

In the coming period, the institution will encourage bold thinking and innovation, create synergies among institutes and partners, reduce its environmental footprint, and increase the social impact of its work. Through strategic investments in infrastructure, it will strengthen its international recognition and actively integrate into the European Research Area.

ZRS Koper will continue the proud story of its 30-year history and consolidate its status as a leading institution in the fields studied by its institutes, thereby contributing to breakthrough achievements and significant contributions to the international scientific community.

Summary prepared based on the ZRS Koper 2025–2030 Strategy, adopted on 25 November 2024.

| Conclusion

