



# Strategic Plan for the Baltic University Programme

***period 2017-2020***

The work to develop this Strategic Plan started January 2016. The ambition from the start was to have an open, transparent and inclusive working process to involve and engage as many persons as possible in the Baltic University Programme. This has been conducted mainly through a survey, two center meetings, two board meetings and at a teachers' conference. The Strategic Plan was decided by the International Programme Board the 21 of November 2016.

## **Background**

The Baltic University Programme (BUP), founded in 1991, have for 25 years been active in the Baltic Sea Region. Today the network gathers 232 universities in the Baltic Sea region (BSR). The Programme started as a project, but is now 25 years later leaving its status as a project to become a permanent institution in the region. This means that we are now heading a new period for the Baltic University Programme. This Strategic Plan points out the strategies and objectives for the period 2017-2020, for a more detailed plan see the Annual plan for 2017.

## **Vision and aim**

The Baltic University Programme is established as an inter-university programme in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) with the aim to develop regional co-operation between universities and corresponding institutions of higher learning. The BUP focuses on questions on sustainable development, environmental protection, and democracy in the Baltic Sea Region. The aim is to support the key role that universities play in a democratic, peaceful and sustainable development. The initiative was taken with

- the intention to contribute to the development of the region in the historic situation where international cooperation between east and west became possible after decades of isolation;
- the recognition that universities play a central role in the development of our societies through education of the young generation, development of knowledge in a new situation, and being a resource for society in applying such knowledge. The purpose of the Programme is thus to promote and support universities and corresponding institutions in the development of the Baltic Sea region by
- supporting sustainable development in its full sense, including economic, social and ecological, aspects;
- supporting the development of democracy and democratic cultures;
- promoting peaceful co-operation, international understanding and communication.

In addition to this, the work within the BUP is related to EUs Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and it is also framed in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The idea is that the 17 goals will stimulate actions in areas of planet, people, partnership, prosperity, and peace. The goals concern the following topics: Poverty, Hunger, Health, Education, Gender/Equality, Water/Sanitation, Energy, Work, Reduced inequalities, Industry/innovation/Infrastructure, Cities/Communities, Consumption/Production, Climate, Life in water, Life on land, Peace/Justice, Partnership. These are all relevant for the BUP to take into consideration in the context of the BSR. The Programme operates through education, research, and co-operation with other actors in the society, and by promoting information to society at large. Direct target groups for the Programme are university teachers, students and researchers. In the case, the Programme sees significant future strategic value in developing/expanding cooperation with other stakeholders - with an interest in the issues raised in the Programme - indirect target groups include funders, local authorities, central government agencies, industries and NGOs in the BSR.

During winter/spring 2016 a survey and a work shop was conducted - among colleagues participating in the Programme - as well as a review of previous notes and reports from BUP meetings since five years back. The results from that work have influenced the content of this Strategic Plan. Results show that issues connected to education, students, university teachers and sustainable development in society in general, were experienced as the major focus regarding aims and goals for the BUP. Research was also mentioned by some. Below a few representative quotations are presented:

*"I believe that BUP has a clear vision from its start. A sustainable and democratic development of our region. As long as there are environmental and social challenges in our region, there will be a place for BUP".*

*"It is extremely valuable to continue development of BUP courses and hold network between universities active. The topic of sustainability is extremely large and teachers need support (new in science, new methods of teaching, knowledge of good practices)".*

*"The main goal should be to have a solid platform for information dissemination not only on what BUP does (the current emphasis) but on opportunities for joint research, international projects etc. Indeed, research is the missing link. All BUP member universities, with no exception, regard research as a priority.*

## **Program objectives 2017-2020**

Out from the survey, previous meetings, workshops, discussions within the Programme in general, and in the International Programme Board and in the National centers, the following objectives have been identified as relevant for the coming work within BUP.

### **Common objectives**

- Main focus on activities that support university teachers, students and researchers within the Programme, regarding issues related to the UN Sustainable Goals in a Baltic Sea Region context and education for sustainable development (ESD).
- Continue to be a strong inter university programme in the Baltic Sea Region, and to have more active and participating members.
- Become a more visible actor in general in the Baltic Sea Region. Take a leading role in the work for SD, by promoting inter- and trans-disciplinary education and research, and being active within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Promote dialogue on issues related to: ESD, inter- and trans-disciplinarity, research questions and results, with other universities, stakeholders and society at large.
- To pursue this by working in closer collaboration with relevant actors within the Baltic Sea Region, such as Council of Baltic Sea States and the Union of Baltic Cities to promote synergy effects in both the short and long term; eg marketing the Programme, find external resources, and developing new projects. Contribute to problem-solving by participating in projects with authorities, municipalities, companies and other organizations working for SD and ESD in the Baltic Sea Region.

### **Objectives and Activities focus on university teachers**

- Arrange university teachers' conferences on regularly basis.
- Arrange activities where university teachers and students meet, eg arrange the university teachers' and students' conference together, some parts/sessions are the same for all. Support activities that promote inter-disciplinarity in ESD.
- Develop education for university teachers in higher education, including a teachers' portfolio and teachers' certificate.
- Have guest lectures/distance lectures to a larger extent, by inviting BUP colleagues on a regular basis to courses that are offered member universities in the Programme.
- Support activities that promote inter-disciplinarity in ESD.
- Support activities for develop, experiment and practice teaching methods for ESD.
- Evaluate how the current BUP course material is being used.
- Find out the interest/need of developing new course material.
- Develop modules that are possible for BUP universities to pick and dock to courses that already exist. This opens up for more individually solutions which gives more flexibility and freedom
- Develop new ways of access to the latest new findings in research with the aim to bridge education and research.
- Develop a common form to write learning outcomes for each BUP courses.
- Introduce on regular basis an annual BUP Prize for the best teacher.

## **Objectives and Activities focus on students**

- Develop activities that support knowledge on the Baltic Sea Region in general and particular in a SD context, eg through arranging courses and conferences.
- Develop activities to get knowledge and to discuss issues regarding inter-disciplinarity in ESD.
- Courses should include applied projects as examples from practice in society and business, eg best practices.
- Include sessions at students' conferences regarding methods for ESD, with the aim to discuss and practice methods that could be used in education.
- Include students in both the preparation and running of conferences and syllabi.
  
- Support students' activities such as summer camps, applications for Erasmus projects and others.
- Continue the activities: the Best PhD Thesis Awards (BTA) and Small Grants Programme (SGP). Before year 2019 evaluate how the activities are working.
- Evaluate how students experience the BUP course material.

## **Objectives and Activities focus on researchers**

- In general support the great opportunity the Programme has in building strong research co-operations/groups/consortiums.
- Develop activities that support researchers regarding SD and inter- and trans-disciplinary research in the Baltic sea Region.
- Develop activities that support networking and co-operation between researchers in the Programme, eg participate in The Baltic Science Network and distribute information about available national programmes in BUP countries.
- Arrange conferences where researchers in the region meet and present and discuss their research, and work for co-operation with a scientific journal to publish a special issue in relation to the conference.
- Support researchers with up dated information on announcements for research grants and partnership projects with society.
- Develop a data base of experts/researchers/research projects within the Programme, in order to support researchers in finding new collaborations, partners and networks, and to create network nodes for thematic areas.
- Arrange work shops for match-making to connect research groups and stimulate to develop research applications.
- Spread information on ongoing research and disseminate results. Investigate the interests of establishing an international peer review journal e.g. "Sustainable Baltic Region".
- Contribute in developing courses and conferences for Ph students.
- Continue developing the mentorship model: Ph students meet experts/external supervisors.
- Encourage researchers to offer- and take the role as co-supervisors and mentors of PhD Students at other universities within the Programme.
- Short notes on latest research published regularly on the BUP homepage.

## **Objectives and Activities focus on stakeholders in society**

- To have an open attitude in general to start co-operations with public authorities such as municipalities, and industry/business as well as non-governmental organizations, regarding SD and ESD in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Support and participate in CBSSs' work regarding Baltic 2030; participate in the expert group, attend seminars and conferences, involve the universities within BUP in the work for implementing the SD goals.
- Support and participate in activities related to EUs Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) especially in the role - BUP being one of their Flagship Projects: Enhance cooperation – on a voluntary basis – between the Universities of the Baltic Sea Region. Lead: Baltic University Programme in coordination with Lithuania (Vilnius University).

## **Programme organisation**

### **International Programme Board**

The International Programme Board manages and monitors the organisation and outcomes of the Programme. The board decides annually on the budget and approves the annual report. The board meets in general two times per year.

### **Secretariats and Management**

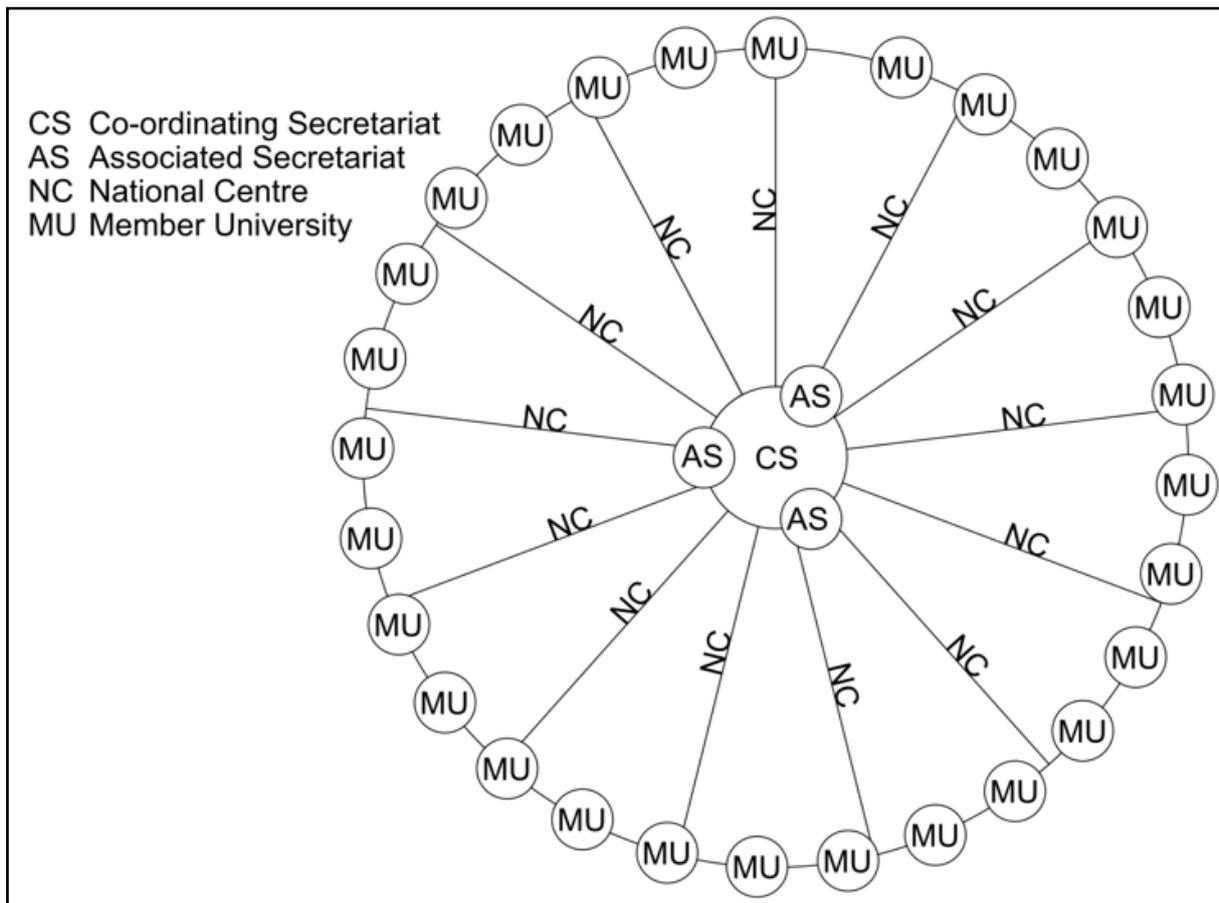
The BUP Secretariats - currently one Co-ordinating Secretariat in Uppsala and three Associated Secretariats in: Lodz, Åbo and Hamburg - will initiate, operate, manage and communicate activities that occur within the Programme. The Co-ordinating Secretariat has the main responsibility to co-ordinate issues within the whole Programme. The Co-ordinating Secretariat and the three Associated Secretariats have regular meetings through the working group for BUP secretariats. The three Associated secretariats have different profiles, Hamburg issues on research, Åbo education, and Lodz students' activities. They are run by the National centre director for respectively country. A suggestion for the Co-ordinating secretariat in Uppsala is that the staff should cover the following roles: programme director, programme co-ordinator, co-ordinator for education, co-ordinator for research, and communication and administration.

### **National centres**

The Baltic University Programme National Centre is a unit under a hosting University, led by a Director and preferably also with assistant staff. The Centre shall coordinate Baltic University Programme activities, most often its country of location. Centre meetings are held 2 times yearly where all centre directors meet. From 2016 a new model has been developed which means that all centres are responsible for running activities within the Programme through a presidency over a time period of six months.

**Time plan for presidency of National Centres:**

Latvia spring 2016  
Finland fall 2016  
Ukraine spring 2017  
Lithuania fall 2017  
Germany spring 2018  
Estonia fall 2018  
Sweden spring 2019  
Poland fall 2019  
Belarus spring 2020  
Russia fall 2020  
Slovakia spring 2021  
Czech Republic fall 2021  
Denmark spring 2022  
Latvia fall 2022



*Figure 1. The dynamic organization of The Baltic University Programme. All parts have a role to make the Programme move.*

## **Objectives and Activities focus on organisation and management**

- To have a policy on quality assurance for activities runned within BUP.
- To have a common policy for external financed projects and routines for running external financed projects.
- To have clear roles within the Programme; the Secretariats, the National Centers, Centre Director etc.
- To have regular contacts with strategic important organizations.
- To have a communication plan in addition to Programme-related communications, also seek to link to other main actors working with SD and ESD in the Baltic sea Region.