



Report on Strategy for the Baltic University Programme (BUP) 2017-2020

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The Strategy 2017-2020 was approved by the International Programme Board on the 21 of November 2016. By that time, the Baltic University Programme, which for 25 years has been active in the Baltic Sea Region, left the status of being a network and became the permanent institution. Since 2016, the universities joining BUP sign an Agreement on cooperation and pay an annual contribution.

Vision and Aim

Since 1991, the main aim of the Baltic University programme is to develop regional co-operation between universities and corresponding institutions of higher learning. The BUP has been focused on questions on sustainable development, environmental protection, and democracy in the Baltic Sea Region, and aimed to support the key role that universities play in a democratic, peaceful and sustainable development. Within the programme, we are strongly convinced that universities play a central role in the development of our societies towards sustainability, through education of the young generation, development of up-to-date knowledge, and being a resource for society in applying such knowledge. Thus, the purpose of the Programme has been and will continue to be promoting and supporting universities and corresponding institutions in the development of the Baltic Sea region with a focus on sustainable development and education for sustainable development, by promoting inter-multi- and trans disciplinary cooperations. The work of the programme has also been closely related to the EU's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

University teachers, students and researchers have been the main target groups for the activities within the period. During the last two years of the time period, a new target group has been added; international offices. This group is important for fostering cooperation between the universities at different levels. We see the strategic value to continue work with the authorities working with internationalization issues at the universities. There is also the potential in developing/expanding cooperation with other stakeholders with the same interests as the Programme (funding organisations, local authorities, NGOs). However, these groups have only approached due to specific projects so far.

During the described period the 10 BUP Themes have been developed: *Circular Economy, Climate Change, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Renewable Energy, Sustainable Food Systems, Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Societies, Sustainable Tourism, Sustainable Water Resources, Urban-Rural Development*. The BUP Themes are focus areas of the Baltic University Programme and we will continue to structure the work of the programme around the themes. For now, all except one theme has a scientific coordinator. The aim is to arrange academic activities and support building a network of researchers and academic teachers around each theme.

Fulfilled objectives 2017-2020

Common objectives

During 2017-2020 the Baltic University Programme strived to fulfil the common objectives stated in the strategy.

- The main focus of the activities supporting university teachers, students and researchers was related to Sustainability Issues in a Baltic Sea Region context and education for sustainable development (ESD)

- BUP continues to be a strong and visible inter-university programme. At the end of the year 2020, the programme included 89 member universities in 12 countries in the Baltic Sea Region. To compare, *at the end of 2016 there were 74 member universities.*
- For increasing visibility in the Baltic Sea Region, BUP promoted dialogue on issues related to SD, ESD, 10 Themes, inter- and trans-disciplinarity, research projects and results, with other universities, stakeholders and society.
- Due to specific of this transitional period, the priority has been given to develop the cooperation within BUP, to focus on the member universities, to have functional National Centres, as well as secretariats, to employ new staff and to develop routines and policies. The Coordinated Secretariat has been running five larger external funded projects during the period.

Objectives and Activities focused on university teachers

The objectives to support university teachers were realised by a number of activities.

First, different forms of training for teachers have been organised on regular basis. Courses on ESD, SAIL conference, participation in ESD projects (EduBalt and EduBUP)) were aimed at promoting inter-disciplinarity in ESD as well as to help teachers to develop, experiment and practice teaching methods for ESD. These activities are called to comprise BUP life-learning education for the university teachers, including a teachers' portfolio and certificate. This work will be continued during the next period.

Secondly, the attention was paid to the teaching materials/ courses as core support for the teachers' work. Looking at how the current BUP course materials are being used and investigating the interest/need of developing new course materials; it has been concluded that new materials are needed but in the form of modules, available online, alternatively MOOC courses. The development of modules has been initiated by the Climate Change project coordinated by the Secretariat as well as the German group of colleagues. Thus, several course modules are under progress. The work on modules/ MOOC courses will be also continue to be prioritised and even to be developed during the next Strategic period.

For the above-mentioned work, it is important to access to the latest findings in research in order to bring them into education. To fulfil this, Research Notes Letter, covering new research in the Baltic Sea Region, was established and is being published regularly, three times annually.

Objectives and Activities focused on students

Different forms of students activities were aimed at spreading knowledge on the Baltic Sea Region in general and on SD in particular. Several students' activities were organised per year: annual students' conference, annual summer school, SAIL, Sea Yawl Voyage, student's engagement in the Annual Forum for EU SBSR, Re-generation 2030 etc. The year 2019 we doubled the number of student activities, in total ten events.

Besides academic knowledge, the BUP students were also given opportunities to learn about decision-making and policy-making aspects by participating in the Annual Forum for EU SBSR and summits of RE-generation 2030. They also exercised the important principles of democracy on the annual students conference, by electing the students' representatives to the BUP International Board. During

these events, local students were given opportunities to be involved in the organization and assisting running BUP events.

Support to PhD students has continued in the form of a PhD Training, a PhD Thesis Award, as well as a Mobility Grant, all on annual basis.

Objectives and Activities focused on researchers

During the strategy period, many efforts have been done to initiate building a strong research community within the Programme and encourage cooperation, focusing on Sustainable Development and inter- and transdisciplinary research in the Baltic Sea Region.

Two scientific conferences have been arranged, a Scientific Conference in Poznan 2018, and the BUP Symposium 2020 which were held online. Related to the symposium three Special Issues in cooperation with scientific journals were the outcome as well as a book of abstracts to cover all 84 presentations. Moreover, BUP Symposium is planned to be an annual event during the coming new Strategic period.

To support cooperation between researchers several other actions have been done: Research profiles have been created on the website, structured according to 10 thematic areas. Scientific Coordinators have been pointed for each Theme. BUP Research and Publication office (BUP RaP) was established by the Associated Secretariat at the Hamburg University of Applied Science, which invites for applications and offers publication possibilities on regular basis. Arranging workshops for match-making to connect research groups and stimulate research applications is among the planned activities to support cooperation.

Establishment and regular publication of *Research Notes Letter* as well as work with the *special issues* of scientific journals contribute into spreading of information about ongoing research and disseminating results. This work will be continued within the new strategic period.

Continuous work with Annual PhD training and Mobility Grant for Young Researchers provides support for the post-graduate students at the beginning of their academic career. At the same time, it encourages senior researchers to offer the role of co-supervisors and mentors of PhD Students at other universities within the Programme. The work on developing a mentorship/ co-supervision model will be continued.

Objectives and Activities focus on stakeholders in society

The BUP has always had an open attitude towards cooperation with public authorities and non-governmental organization. Recently, the Programme supported the CBSSs' work regarding Baltic 2030 by participation in several projects (Towards Baltic 2030 – From Talk to Work, Baltic Science Network, BSN Power House, common workshops at Annual Forum of EUSBSR) as well as supported the CBSS expert group. Being a flagship project of Policy Area Education of the EU SBSR, the BUP supports cooperation between the Universities in the region and contribute to the Annual Forum of EU SBSR by students' participation to make voices of new generation heard.

Objectives and Activities focused on organisation and management

Statutes, Agreement and other policy documents

In connection to the changes due to the programme organization, the work on updating the statutes of the baltic university programme has been done in parallel with the development of a new membership agreement. In the final stage, the Statutes was incorporated into a *participating university agreement within the framework of the baltic university programme*, which is to be signed by the universities joining the BUP.

Several other documents have been developed to clarify the roles and tasks within the Programme *eg* new agreement for the Secretariats and the National Centras, and for the Associated Secretariats (2018).

In order to assure the quality of activities run within BUP, several actions have been taken: the review process for PhD Award and Mobility Grant has been developed, as well as a review process for abstracts and paper submission. We also introduced a standardized evaluation form for various events and started collecting statistics. Several policies on organization and work with events, projects have been developed.

The Statutes for the Students' Parliament and Representatives and procedure to work with the students' parliament have been developed to regulate previously existing democratic institution for BUP students.

Communication report

A new focus on communication in regards to the strategy has been held during this period and has among other things resulted in the employment of a Communications officer at the coordinating secretariat.

A communication strategy and a BUP Communication Plan, two documents that have been developed in this time period. A number of actions are stated, structured and completed:

- The BUP logo has been updated to reflect both history and future of the BUP
- New layout for BUP material (printed, digital, and videos) has been developed and produced
- BUP information is updated and divided into BUP weekly channelling informing about upcoming events within the programme and at the member university; BUP Newsletter channelling reflections on past events, and the Annual Report reflecting on what has been done in one year.
- The BUP website was aligned with Uppsala University policy, updated and restructured
- BUP Research letter was established
- Book of Abstracts for the PhD Annual Training was established
- BUP Symposium 2020-materials including website, Book of Abstracts, Poster exposé, videos
- Social media channels. Maintaining and developing existing channels: Facebook and YouTube. Establishing the Instagram BUP account and the LinkedIn BUP account and group.
- Focus on establishing closer contacts at member universities. We have now 1-5 new contact persons at each member university.
- Focus on being more visible within Uppsala university, BUP is now included as one of the large International cooperations at the Uppsala university website, BUP has now a contact person at the university faculty, have been invited to present BUP at the Vice Chancellor's board meeting.

We also strive to establish direct communication with all 89 member universities. Therefore, we invited more colleagues to take an active role in communication with BUP. The mailing lists were structured and updated with the contact details to persons interested in/responsible for promoting BUP at their respective universities.

The Secretariat has also worked at having regular contacts with strategic important organizations. During the past period, internal communication with the authorities and Division for Internationalization at Uppsala University was developed. The BUP was also presented at strategic meetings (*EUSBSR, CBSS*).

Report on main Activities performed regardless of the Strategy

BUP Presidency

Shortly before the strategic plan was approved, a new model – BUP Presidency - was developed. From 2016 all BUP National Centra would hold the BUP Presidency for six months according to a rotation schedule. The presidency was introduced in order to share responsibilities with the centra and by this allow them to influence the Programme. The holder of the BUP Presidency is responsible for the content and arrangement of BUP annual events. As the National Centra are encouraged to promote BUP in their own country during the presidency, therefore additional events and activities aimed at strengthening the network in the BUP are welcomed.

Since being introduced, the presidency was a helpful tool and opportunity to promote the Baltic University Programme in the respective countries. The order has been the following:

Spring 2016 – Latvia; Autumn 2016 – Finland; Spring 2017 – Ukraine; Autumn 2017 – Lithuania; Spring 2018 – Germany; Autumn 2018 – Poland; Spring 2019 – Estonia; Autumn 2019 – Russia; Spring and Autumn 2020 – No presidency due to COVID-19, postponed to 2021.

New Centra

As an outcome of several working meetings and after taking into consideration voices in the Programme, in spring 2018 the leadership of the Baltic University Programme has decided to open a call for applications for all members' universities to host the BUP National Centra. Due to this process as well as because of generational shift, in 2020 there are new hosting universities and /or new centre directors in Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Russia, and Sweden. We believe that cooperation between colleagues who have been devoted to BUP for a long time and young enthusiastic newcomers will contribute to the BUP work, enriching with new ideas, visions, projects and so on.

Coordinating Secretariat Organization

Due to generation shift at the Coordinating Secretariat in Uppsala, new employments were necessary. The time-consuming process of employment of a communication officer, a new project assistant, and to upgrade the existing position from project administrator to project coordinator has been done during the last 2 years. Thus, the Secretariat now consists of a Programme Director; a Project Coordinator; a Project Administrator; and a Communication officer.

Also, we decided to come back to the internships at the Secretariat. The first one started in August 2020 until December 2020, overlapping with the next one starting from mid of November 2020.

In the end of the last year of this strategy period , fall 2020, a work started to plan for the Celebration of BUP 30 years in 2021, as well as planning for a new Strategy BUP 2021-2025 and an Action Plan for 2021 which were ready to present for the BUP Board on the meeting before Christmas 2020.