

Strategy for the Baltic University Programme (BUP) for a period 2021-2025

The Strategy was approved by the International Programme Board on 11 June 2021.

Background

The Baltic University Programme (BUP), founded in 1991, have for 30 years been active in the Baltic Sea Region. The Programme started as a network, since 2016 it became a permanent institution in the region. Currently about 90 universities located in 12 countries of the Baltic Sea Drainage Area are participating. All universities joining BUP sign an Agreement on cooperation and pay an annual contribution.

The Strategic Plan 2021 -2025 is called to define objectives and priorities for this period, followed by an action plan for each year of the period, describing concrete activities to do per year.

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 and support regional co-operation between universities and corresponding institutions of higher learning. Thirty years of a fruitful cooperation, the BUP and its mission can hardly be more topical to work for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region, both at environmental and societal level.

-Within the programme, we are strongly convinced that universities play a central role in the development of our societies through education of the young generation and by conducting relevant research contributing to sustainability. The United 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 goals with indicators to monitor progress. The Academia and research community constitute a crucial group of stakeholders who can strongly support the achievement of the SDGs. Whether it is at the global, regional or local level, universities can contribute in multiple ways, through knowledge generation, innovations, data, technical analysis, and above all through training the next generation of students in building a sustainable future. The Programme promote and encourage inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary co-operations where academic disciplines and perspectives of sustainable development meet. The purpose of the Programme is thus to contribute as a regional actor in this work.

-During the last period, 10 focus areas so called BUP Themes related to sustainable development in the region, have been defined: Circular Economy; Climate Change; Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); Renewable Energy; Sustainable Food Systems; Sustainable Mobility; Sustainable Societies; Sustainable Tourism; Sustainable Water Resources. The Themes are developed in order to structure the work of the programme.

- University teachers, students, researchers and vice chancellors/rectors have been direct target groups for the programme for 30 years. During the last strategic period, a new target group, important for fostering cooperation between the universities at different levels was identified and targeted: international offices. 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 an interest in the issues raised in the Programme (funders, local authorities, NGOs).

-Recently, the notion of Internationalization as such was added to the BUP agenda. Indeed, nowadays Internationalization is among main priorities for the universities and other educational establishments. As it is widely discussed, most universities work on the implementation of this notion into their structure and work. Investigating the idea of internationalization and looking at the main BUP activities, we conclude that Internationalization in Practice is what the Baltic University Programme is all about.

-Recently, the work of the programme has been closely related to EUs Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The Baltic University Programme is also one of two Flagships within the Policy Area Education in EU. As BUP celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2021, the new Strategic plan for coming years will define a new vision taking into consideration what has been done, and what are the present challenges for the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). In addition, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relevant to the context of the BSR, will be included in the work.

Program objectives 2021-2025

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).
- Reach the participating universities at a strategic level. Develop new ways of looking at internationalization by broadening our focus (a part from students, teachers and research) by:
 - Give priority to on-line education as support in the universities' work to transfer to digitalisation of courses
 - Support and encourage the universities work on sustainable campus
 - Develop activities and a network of the target group "international offices" at universities
 - Promote "Internationalisation at Home"
 - Develop communication on regular basis with communicators at the universities
- Continue to be a strong inter university programme in the Baltic Sea Region, and to have more active and participating member universities.
- Support, promote and encourage inter- and trans-disciplinary education and research in the Programme. Promote dialogue on issues related to: ESD, inter- and trans-disciplinary, research questions and results, with other universities, stakeholders and society at large. Stress critical thinking as a part of scientific knowledge and democracy.

Objectives focus on university teachers

- To support university teachers´ by providing them with up-to-dated information on SD, ESD and other relevant information on regularly basis by organising teachers courses, modules, conferences and other activities
- 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.
- Develop continuing education for university teachers in higher education on an regular basis
- Support activities that promote inter-and trans-disciplinarity in ESD.
- Support activities for develop, experiment and practice teaching methods for ESD.
- Support in the work to transform education material to online education • Develop educational content (modules) that are possible for BUP universities to use in their existing courses. 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.

Objectives focus on students

- Develop different forms of students´activities that support knowledge on the Baltic Sea Region in general and particular in a SD context, eg through arranging courses, conferences, summer camps, BUP student ambassadors, E-Tutors Programme, Master Thesis Training etc.
- Include students in both the preparation and running of conferences and syllabiPromote an active role of students in the Baltic University Programme by working with the students representatives, developing a concept of Students Ambassadors at participating universities, including students in organization of events etc.
- Continue the activities: the Best PhD Thesis Awards (BTA) and BUP Mobility Grant for young scholars.
- Support students´ career opportunities by hosting interns at the Secretariat and encouraging other BUP units to host interns.

Objectives 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 transdisciplinary research in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Develop activities that support networking and co-operation between researchers in the Programme, eg organise scientific conferences and Symposiums, distribute information about resent research in the region, provide information about available programmes and opportunities in BUP countries.

- Support researchers with up dated information on announcements for research grants and partnership projects with society.
- Develop a database 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 workshops for match-making to connect research groups and stimulate to develop research applications.
- Spread information on ongoing research and disseminate results. Invite authors to contribute in sc. journals by Special Issues related to SD and the 10 Themes.
- 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.

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 activities related to EUs Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) especially in the role - BUP being one of their Flagship Projects, as well as EU Eastern Partnership framework.

Objectives and Activities focus on organisation and management

- Continue to develop policies on quality assurance for activities run within BUP, as well as enhance transparency and visibility eg keep records on statistics and develop standardized evaluation form.
- To develop a common policy on implementing sustainability, e g develop "sustainability check list" for all BUP events, develop policy on sustainable expenditures.
- To continue regular communication with the strategically important organizations.
- To continue a coherent work on communication with the participating universities by enlarging the list of contact persons, organising regular informational meetings, providing participating universities with relevant PR material to market BUP.