

REPORT OF THE SECOND EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING OF THE BLACK SEA UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

1. The Second Meeting of the Black Sea Universities Network was held on May 21 – 22, 1999, in Varna, Bulgaria.

2. The meeting was attended by the following participants:

ROMANIA

Prof. Adrian Bavaru: President, BSUN

AZERBAIJAN

Prof. Rafig Mehdiyev: Rector, Azerbaijan Technical University

BULGARIA

Prof. Anna Nedialkova: President, Varna Free University (VFU)

Prof. Assen Nedev: Rector, Varna Technical University

GREECE

Prof. Maria Kaila: Vice-Rector, University of the Aegean

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Prof. Nikolay Topolsky: Vice-President, International Informatization Academy

TURKEY

Prof. Suha Sevuk: Rector, Middle East Technical University

Prof. Ibrahim Yildirim: Chairman of the International Academic Relations, Istanbul University

UKRAINE

Prof. Ivan G. Grabar: Vice-Rector, The Zhitomir Institute of Engineering and Technology

Prof. Peter Melnichuk: Vice-Rector, The Zhitomir Institute of Engineering and Technology

GUESTS

Prof. Rumen Pranchov: Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science

Ambassador Vasile Sandru: Black Sea University Foundation

Prof. Blagovest Sendov, Bulgarian Parliament

Mr. Alexander Furman, Secretary, PABSEC

Prof. Elka Todorova: Vice-Rector, Varna Free University (VFU)

Prof. George Enchev: Director, International Relations, VFU

Prof. Kemal Iskender: Mimar Sinan University

Prof. Mustafa Saatci: Nigde University

Prof. Ramazan Tasdurmaz: Rector, Nigde University

Prof. Sinan Katnas: Gazi University

BSUN INTERNATIONAL PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

Dr. Eden Mamut

Rita Avram

3. Program of the meeting

- Greetings from Bulgarian Ministry of Education
- Prof. Adrian Bavaru - President of BSUN: ***Progress Report and Priorities in the Development of the Black Sea Universities Network***
- Alexander Furman - PABSEC: ***The Conclusions Regarding the Mutual Diploma Recognition Problem in the Black Sea Region***
- Discussions with the participation of Mr. Blagovest Sendov, PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee, and Ambassador Vasile Sandru, Black Sea University Foundation;

- **Organizational development of BSUN**

- Dr. Eden Mamut - International Permanent Secretariat of BSUN: ***The Activities of the BSUN International Permanent Secretariat;***
- Prof. Anna Nedialkova - Varna Free University, Varna, Bulgaria: ***The Principals for Organizing the Publication of the BSUN;***
- Prof. Ivan G. Grabar and Prof. Peter Melnichiuk - Zhitomir Institute of Engineering and Technology, Ukraine: ***The Report on the Concept of "Short Certificate Course" and Establishment of a Standard;***
- Prof. Ibrahim Yildirim - Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey: ***The Project for the Budget for the 1st Framework Program***

- **Research and academic co-operation**

- Prof. Suha Sevuk - Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey: ***The Proposal for a Master Program as a Pilot Project;***
- Prof. Rafiq Mehdiiev - Azerbaijan Technical University, Baku, Azerbaijan: ***The Guidelines for Joint Research Projects;***
- Prof. Anna Nedialkova - Varna Free University, Varna Bulgaria and Prof. Nikolay Topolsky - International Informatization Academy, Russian Federation: ***Research and Production Center for Emergency Security for the Black Sea Region in BSUN***
- Prof. Assen Nedev - Varna Technical University: ***The Project on Distance Education Centre;***
- The Adoption of the Report, Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the Second MEB.

4. Professor Bavaru presented the report of activity for the period that followed the Executive Board Meeting, held on December 11, 1998, in

Bucharest. In this period, the BSUN activity has been oriented on the main directions, established in the 1st Framework Program:

- a. To set up and find support for organizing the activities under the regional sustainable development component;
- b. The development of the communications and contacts with the members;
- c. The initiation of the academic cooperation activities projects;
- d. The promotion of the Black Sea University Network in the region and around the world.

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

In the morning session of the meeting there were debated the aspects regarding the diploma recognition and the problem of credit transfer in the region, multi-party agreement between university members, and academic mobility.

Mr. Blagovest Sendov, PABSEC proposes the registration of the BSUN to active organizations, like: International Associations of the Universities, International Associations of UNESCO. Mr. Blagovest Sendov believes that these organizations should be interested in collaboration with BSUN. BSUN should participate to the International Conference of Rectors from European Universities. Mr. Blagovest Sendov advised that this Network have to play a pivotal role in the development of academic cooperation in the region as a significant dimension of the Black Sea cooperation process. BSUN will have the support of PABSEC.

Mr. Alexander Furman, PABSEC presented the conclusions regarding the Mutual Diploma Recognition Problem in the Black Sea Region. In this respect, in 1997 was adopted the Lisbon Convention.

27/1998 recommendation "On cooperation of the academic communities of the BSEC member countries" adopted by the PABSEC in Bucharest in June 1998 that urged the national parliaments and governments to promote the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications through bilateral and multilateral agreements, to accede to the UNESCO and Council of Europe conventions in this field, pending the conclusion of agreements, to promote the exchange of information concerning recognition matters.

The main conclusions arrived by the PABSEC on this matter are the followings:

- a considerable diversity in the education systems is a reality which should be fully respected;
- the existing legal framework should be fully utilised:

- international and European instruments, first of all, the up-to-date, comprehensive UNESCO/Council of Europe Lisbon Convention of 1997. It came into force on 1 February 1999. Two BSEC countries - Azerbaijan and Romania - have already ratified this Convention. Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia have signed it, Albania, Greece, Russia, Turkey, Armenia have not signed;
- the Black Sea Convention on Co-operation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information (1993);
- numerous bilateral educational cooperation agreements.
- existing mechanisms should be utilized and strengthened:
 - national information centers on academic recognition and mobility as part of the ENIC network;
 - international cooperation with UNESCO, Council of Europe, EU, etc.
 - direct inter-university cooperation;
 - university associations, such as the Black Sea Universities Network.
- as a prerequisite for bilateral and multilateral agreements, the Black Sea countries should step up information exchange on higher education systems, institutions and recognition matters. To this end workshops, seminars, WG's, etc.;
- bilateral recognition agreements;
- possibility of a regional convention.

At the proposal of Romania, the Assembly recommended to establish a co-ordination Centre within the Black Sea University framework and with the support from the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES).

As the recognition of higher education qualifications is a rather complex and specific subject requiring extensive and painstaking studies of the situation in different countries, purposeful efforts must be deployed by the National Ministries of Education and other relevant authorities.

In this respect, the BSUN can act as a catalyst for speeding up the process leading towards the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications in the region, by promoting various steps to recognize qualifications within the Network, among its participating universities. The decentralization of modern education and the institutional autonomy raise the role of individual educational establishments and their associations in this process. The next step will be bilateral mutual diploma recognition, being signed an agreement between Romania and Moldova.

Ambassador Vasile Sandru from Black Sea University Foundation (BSUF) has transmitted the message of BSUF expressing the satisfaction for the fruitful activity and Program of the BSUN which represents a valuable work aimed at the promotion of the spirit of understanding and cooperation in the elaboration of solutions for important problems of our region.

Ambassador Vasile Sandru has mentioned the program of the activity of BSUF. The main directions of BSUF program are: conflict prevention and resolution, political culture and culture of peace, public administration and distance teaching. During the period from May to October, 30 summer courses will be organized embracing a large diversity of subjects, such as: "Globalism and Regionalism. A new role for the Universities"(organized with BSUN and CEPES UNESCO), problems of environment in the Black Sea Region, Transportation, Sustainable Development, religions in the Black Sea Area, the 1999 Eclipse project, Energy efficiency, the Future of Europe, the Euroregions and cooperation, a/o.

BSUF program and the program of BSUN will offer many possibilities for an efficient cooperation. The BSUF is always ready to work together for promoting our common goals.

We consider very important the cooperation of BSUF with the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC and our Foundation is ready to engage in projects of common interest.

Conclusions coming up after discussions in the Executive Board:

- a. the development of the transferable credit system for universities applying this system; the exclusion of the specialties with differences: Medicine, Law, Engineering, and identify the ways for solving these problems.
- b. the exchange of the documents (program, curricula, information about each university members);
- c. the organization of distance learning courses, due of their cheaper costs;
- d. the informing of the Education Ministers about the bilateral agreements;
- e. the support of BSEC and PABSEC for speeding up this process;
- f. the establishment of a Committee for Mutual Diploma Recognition. The members of this Committee will be the following:
 - Turkey – Prof. Ibrahim Yildirim, Chairman of International Academic Relation, Istanbul University
 - Greece – Prof. Maria Kaila, Vice-Rector, University of the Aegean
 - Ukraine – Prof. Boris Samotokin, Rector, Zhitomir Institute of Engineering and Technology
 - Bulgaria – Prof. Elka Todorova, Vice-Rector, Varna Free University
 - Russian Federation - Prof. Nikolay Topolsky, Vice-President, International Informatization Academy

Organizational development of BSUN

In the afternoon session problems regarding the organizational development of BSUN were discussed, and projects in order to be approved and included in the Ist Framework Program were presented.

Mr. Eden Mamut presented IPS activity from the beginning and the requirement for updating the Statute according to the new conditions.

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

The activities that have been developed starting with September 1998 were as following:

1. editing and publishing of third and fourth issue of "Letter from the BSUN";
2. the preparation of the proposal for the BSUN Ist Framework Program 1999 – 2000;
3. the organization of the Ist BSUN Executive Board Meetings;
4. the preparation of the project for BSUN web site;
5. the distribution of the information in the Network and development of some connections within the Network;
6. the preparation of the BSUN President's visit in Turkey;
7. the development of some connections with different institutions;
8. the development of the concepts for "Short Certificate Course"; "Joint Research Projects", "Master of Science";
9. the establishment of contacts with some funding institutions;
10. the establishment of a closed partnership with the team from Varna Free University.

The team of IPS consists of: Dr. Eden Mamut and Mrs. Rita Avram. All expenses of the Network (including the team wages and the secretariat costs: correspondence, communications, newsletters) were covered by the "Ovidius" University, Constantza.

The Executive Board Members have agreed on the modification and updating of the BSUN Statute. The responsible person was nominated Dr. Eden Mamut, IPS Director, which will conceive a draft of BSUN Statute in order to send it at all university members for signing.

Prof. Ibrahim Yildirim from Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey presented ***The Project for the Budget for the Ist Framework Program.***

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

Incomes from membership fees:

ARMENIA	2 members x 500 USD = 1.000 USD
AZERBAIJAN	2 members x 500 USD = 1.000
USD	
BULGARIA	2 members x 500 USD = 1.000
USD	
GREECE	3 members x 500 USD = 1.500 USD
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	1 member x 500 USD = 500
USD	
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	2 members x 500 USD =
1.000 USD	
TURKEY	2 members x 500 USD = 1.000 USD
UKRAINE	1 member x 500 USD = 500 USD
ROMANIA	5 members x 500 USD = 2.500 USD

ESTIMATED TOTAL INCOMES FROM MEMBERSHIP FEES **10.000 USD**

Support of Romanian Ministry of Education for organizing four Summer Schools at "Ovidius" University of Constantza – 10.000 USD.

Romanian Ministry of Education will partially finance the salaries for a secretary and for a director of the International Permanent Secretariat. The contribution of the Romanian Ministry of Education will be as following:

Secretary	60 USD x 12 months = 720 USD/year
Director	120 USD x 12 months = 1440 USD/year

Total expected incomes: 10.000 USD +10.000 USD +720 USD + 1440 USD = 22.160 USD

Estimated expenses:

Salaries

Director of IPS	400 USD x 12 months = 4.800 USD/year
Secretary	150 USD x 12 months = 1.800 USD/year

Total salaries	6.600 USD/year
Summer Schools	10.000 USD/year
BSUN Newsletter (issued quarterly)	4 issues x 500 USD/issue = 2.000
USD/year	
Phone, fax, mail	3.000 USD/year
Travel expenses	560 USD/year
Total expenses	22.160 USD/year

All the other activities under the 1st Framework Programs will be financed on a Grant Basis by different funding institutions and programs.

1. It has been established a deadline for sending the membership fee. It has been decided that the annual membership fee will be 500 USD for each member of the Network. **The deadline for the membership fee will be the end of July 1999.**
2. IPS will send the faxes **to all university members in order to announce this deadline.**
3. The Board Meeting agreed that it is important to have a Fund Raising Committee led by prof. Ibrahim Yildirm, Prof. Maria Kaila and Prof. Blagovest Sendov, that will analyzed the opportunities for attracting funds required for financing the BSUN Programs.
4. The Executive Board has established that the execution of the Budget has to be controlled by a Financial Auditing Committee consisting of 11 members from all member countries. The country representatives in the EB have to appoint one member in Financial Auditing Committee till the end of July. The functions of the above mentioned Committee will be approved by the Executive Board and included in the Statute of the BSUN.

Prof. Anna Nedialkova has presented ***Principals for Organizing the Publications of the BSUN.***

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

1. Recent history has clearly shown that fundamental improvements in the contract between faculty, universities, state educational systems can only emerge and be long-lasting if all parties concerned have had an opportunity to contribute to the debate and to make their own voices heard. This need for consensus building is reflected in the following Program for Publications Organization (PPO) at BSUN.
2. The Program of Publication Organization is about co-operation and exchanges of experiences between the members of the BSUN.
3. The Program of Publication Organization (PPO) is part of the BSUN, which is launched to provide the Universities-members with help for the dissemination of know-how in the field of inter-university exchange in an overall regional situation of transition to a free-market economy and to a democratic system. The aim of the program is to offer practical and effective support to the BSUN in its efforts to reform the educational systems progressively bringing them up to EU and world standards.

The Executive Board analyzing the proposal of Varna Free University has concluded that for the first year we have to concentrate only for the Newsletter and on a catalog of all member universities.

Prof. Suha Sevuk, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey: ***The Proposal for a Master Program as a Pilot Project.***

Prof. Suha Sevuk from Middle East Technical University presented a project that will be called “**ACADEMICON - Academic CooperAtion for the DEvelopment of a Msc Integrated CONcept**”.

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

The activities:

1. **Market research** – the member universities that will agree to become a component of the cluster will develop a market research session in order to identify the demands of the market for specialists in some of the above mentioned areas;
2. **Identification of the MSC Programs delivered by the member Universities** – to analyze the curricula of the MSC Programs delivered by some of the member Universities and to look if they match with the requirements of the market;
3. **Identification of some funding resources** - the members of the cluster will identify some funding resources like foundations, business associations, international corporations which are interested to participated in the funding of such a program;
4. **Selection of a group of participants** – a centralized selection, based on common standards, of the graduate students that will participate to the project;
5. **Developing some flexible curricula** – based on the requirements coming from the market there will be developed curricula by joining the courses from several universities;
6. **Setting up of a Coordination Center** – the members of the cluster will set up a Coordination Center that will be permanently in contact with the members and will host the track record of each student and program involved in the project;
7. **Continuously reviewing sessions** – the cluster members will have a system of reporting and reviewing in order to improve the quality of the programs.

The Middle East Technical University is ready to involve important resources in this project. METU is ready to host a number a students having the status of “special student” and taking a number of courses in this University. For the

existing Master Programs, METU can accept applications from different other member Universities, but the selection of the students will be based on standards of METU. In the same time, METU will provide for a limited number of students, hosting facilities.

In addition, Middle East Technical University is offering a degree-oriented program in Marine Sciences, concentrating on Black Sea. The offer covers: tuition waiver, free accommodation, and food for 5 students. These students may complete the full or partial requirements for a M.Sc or Ph. D degree in our Marine Sciences Institute. The details of the program are given in the attached file.

The Executive Board Meeting approved the project and was agreed that the project has to be prepared in details and included in the program of the Network.

Prof. Ivan G. Grabar and Prof. Peter Melnichuk from Zhitomir Institute of Engineering and Technology, Ukraine, have presented The ***Report on the Concept of “Short Certificate Course” and Establishment of a Standard.***

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

The proposal for the short certificate course standard is based on their experience in Zhitomir Institute and follows the principles that have been presented above:

1. **Specific objective** – the short certificate course has to have a very focused and specific objective of transmitting some details in a very narrow area;
2. **Expected results** – the expected results regarding the knowledge, attitude or skills of the participants have to be precisely defined before;
3. **Period** – a short certificate course cannot be longer than three days;
4. **Credits** – each short certificate course has to be ranked with a number of credits that has to be recognized by all the member Universities;
5. **Diploma** – the Black Sea Universities Network has to have a standard Diploma for Short Certificate Courses, issued and under the strict control of the International Permanent Secretariat;
6. **Financing** – the financing of Short Certificate Course will be under a fee basis and sponsorships or grants;
7. **Course development standards** – the BSUN has to develop a standard for Short Certificate Course Developers.

The Zhitomir Institute of Engineering and Technology is ready to set up a project for the development of a Center that could deal with the Course Development Standards, reviewing and recommending the approval of the proposed Short Certificate Courses proposed by the member Universities.

The Center will have affiliates from different member Universities and will take care for the continuous improvement of the quality of the Short Certificate Courses. This project has the support of Ministry of Education from Ukraine.

The project has been approved and Prof. Samotokin will prepare a detailed program for the development of the Center.

Prof. Rafiq Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan Technical University, Baku, Azerbaijan has presented ***The Guidelines for Joint Research Projects***.

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

Azerbaijan Technical University is ready to set up in Baku a coordination point for the research activities under the 1st Framework Program. This Center could have a team from all the member countries in order to prepare some very important tools for further development of research activities:

- A directory of the research units affiliated to the Network;
- A directory of the research staff affiliated to the Network;
- A marketing strategy for the research services for BSUN;
- An interface with the international funding resources for research activities;
- A quality assurance system for the research activities in the region;
- An itinerant exhibition of research projects and achievements of the Black Sea Universities Network members.

Till the Conference of September, Prof. Rafiq Mehdiyev and Dr. Eden Mamut have to prepare a project that will be presented at the Conference in order to be included in the program and the budget of the Network.

Prof. Anna Nedialkova, from Varna Free University, Varna Bulgaria and Prof. Nikolay Topolsky, International Informatization Academy, Russian Federation presented ***Research and Production Center for Emergency Security for the Black Sea Region in BSUN***.

The presented paper will be included in extenso in the BSUN Newsletter.

The proposal is that a Black Sea Center for Security Studies should be set up with the eponymous Center at VFU and the Moscow Institute for Fire Safety as a coordinator.

Main Priorities:

- academic co-operation - joint Master programs, post-graduate specialization courses, exchange of lecturers and post-graduates for specialization courses;
- research in the field of civil control over the security structures in the Black Sea region countries;
- studies in the field of industrial and ecological security;
- consultations and expertise intended for national and regional security structures;
- participation in international scientific CO-operation on security problems outside the Black Sea Region.

The project has to be restructured in order to fit in the objectives of the 1st Framework Program. The final draft of the project will be submitted to the BSUN Conference in order to be approved.

Prof. Assen Nedev, from Varna Technical University presented in the end of the works a project on ***Distance Education Centre***. The main objectives of this project are following:

- to promote Distance Education
- to develop courses
- to select specialties
- to collaborate with all departments.

This project could be called “ BSUN for Distance Learning”.

The Executive Board agreed that the Distance Learning is a very appropriate technology for the development of the Network. Some universities (METU, University of the Aegean) have a very well developed infrastructure for DL. Consequently, it is important to start by reviewing all the existing DL programs and afterwards to set up a project for the Network.

In the end, Professor Bavaru presented all his gratitude for the contributions of the participants and it were established a meeting of the Executive Board in Ankara at mid July that will decide on the future conference.