

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

1. The Executive Board Meeting of the Black Sea Universities Network was held on February 16 - 18, 2001 in Rhodes, Greece
2. The meeting was attended by the following participants:

ALBANIA	Prof. Marenglen SPIRO, Rector State University of Tirana
ARMENIA	Prof. Haroutune ARMENIAN, President American University of Armenia
AZERBAIJAN	Prof. Havar MAMEDOV, Rector Azerbaijan Technical University Prof. Abel MAHARRAMOV, Rector Baku State University
BULGARIA	Prof. Dr. Pavel GEORGIEV PAVLOV, Vice Rector Varna Free University Prof. Temel TEMELKOV, Rector Varna University of Medicine Assoc. prof. Dr. Marina Apostolova NENOVA, Vice Rector, Head of Dept. Infectious Diseases, Varna University of Medicine Assoc. prof. Anelia Dimitrova KLISSAROVA Vice Rector for Scientific Research, Varna University of Medicine Assoc. prof. Dr. Lilyana Petrova HAVEZOVA Vice Rector for Quality Assessment, Varna University of Medicine Dr. Krassimir Dimitrov IVANOV - Information Technologies Officer, Dept. of General Surgery, Varna University of Medicine Mrs Aneta Ilieva DOKOVA - Head of Dept. of International Relations, Varna University of Medicine

GREECE  
 Prof. Maria Kaila, Vice Rector  
 University of the Aegean  
 Prof. Anna Vriheia, National Technical  
 University of Athens  
 Prof. Miltiadis Papaioakeim, Democritus  
 University of Thrace  
 Prof. Michael Aggelidis, President,  
 University of the Aegean, Department of  
 Environmental Science  
 Prof. Michael Karidis, President, University  
 of the Aegean Department of Marine  
 Sciences  
 Prof. Nikitas Polemikos, Dean, University of  
 the egean, School of Hellenic and  
 Mediterranean Studies  
 Mr. John Maxairidis, General Secretary  
 Ministry of the Aegean

ROMANIA  
 Prof. Adrian BAVARU, Rector, "Ovidius"  
 University of Constantza  
 Prof. Paul ROSCA, Chancellor, University  
 "PETROLEUM & GAS" of Ploiesti  
 Prof. Eden MAMUT, "Ovidius" University of  
 Constantza  
 Rita AVRAM, "Ovidius" University of  
 Constantza

RUSSIA  
 Prof. KARKISHCHENKO Alexander  
 Nikolayevich, Vice Rector for Academic  
 Affairs, Doctor of Physical and Mathematical  
 Sciences, Taganrog State University of  
 Radio Engineering  
 Prof. Alexander Petrovich EFREMOV, Vice  
 Rector  
 Peoples' Friendship University of Russia

TURKEY  
 Prof. Suha SEVUK  
 Middle East Technical University  
 Prof. Ibrahim YILDIRIM, Chief of the  
 International Academic Relations Committee  
 Istanbul University  
 Prof. Dr. Rezan Tatlidil, Vice Rector  
 Ege University

UKRAINE  
 Professor Borys SAMOTOKIN, Vice-Rector  
 for International Relations, Zhitomir Institute  
 of Engineering & Technology

INVITED PERSONS	1 Mr. Berthold A. MULLENEISEN	FVDH - Freier Verband Deutscher Heilpraktiker E.V.
	2 Mr. Siegfried H. SCHIERSTEDT, Vorstand	FVDH - Freier Verband Deutscher Heilpraktiker E.V.
	3 Prof. Georges THILL	University of Namur. Belgium

4. After the welcoming statements, and the opening statements it were presented the activities that have been developed and was finalized the Second Framework Program for 2001 -2002. In the next period the activity of the Black Sea Universities Network will be focused on sectorial corporations as: the corporation of technical universities, the corporation of humanistic universities, the corporation of the universities of medicine, universities of economical sciences, management and affairs, and the corporation of universities of sports and arts.
5. Regarding the organizational development of BSUN, will be set up the national secretariats (focal points) coordinated by the International Permanent Secretariat. It will be stressed on the student activity in the frame of BSUN. It will be organized a Students' Forum form the Black Sea region. It will be initiated the special programs on mobility of the students and staff.
6. Professor Bavaru proposed that BSUN to sign an agreement with UNIMED, Mediterranean Sea Universities Network.
7. It was appreciated the project of the OUC on Alternative Medicine.
8. The next Congress will be held in Azerbaijan on: Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

## Reports from the Round Tables

### Report of the Round Table “ACADEMIC PROGRAMS”

Rapporteur: Michael O. Angelidis  
University of the Aegean, Greece

The participants of this round table were: Professor TEMELKOV (Bulgaria), Professor NENOVA (Bulgaria), Professor HAVEZOVA (Bulgaria), Professor IVANOV (Bulgaria), Mrs. DOKOVA (Bulgaria), Professor MAHARRAMOV (Azerbaijan), Professor YILDIRIM (Turkey), Professor KARKISHCHENKO (Russia), Professor EFREMOV (Russia), Professor SAMOTOKIN (Ukraine), Mrs. Avram (Romania), Mr. MULLENEISEN (Germany), Mr. SCHIERSTEDT (Germany). Professor ANGELIDIS (Greece) was the chairman the meeting.

After exchange of ideas and thorough discussion, the following conclusions were made and proposed to the Executive Board Meeting of BSUN.

The collaborating Universities of the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) should try to support the exchange of students and teaching staff, based on bilateral agreements and the organization of joint academic activities.

#### 1. Students

For the students, an exchange program should be developed similar to the SOCRATES Program of the European Union (EU). However, several issues need clarification before the implementation of such an exchange program.

There is no automatic recognition of the degrees provided by all the Black Sea Universities. In many countries accreditation systems are in operation to recognize the University Degrees, but we are not yet in the position to fully accredit courses offered at different Black Sea Universities without further examination. Therefore, it is simpler to begin the student exchanges on an easier activity, such as the practical training of the students, which requires only a bilateral agreement between the two Universities (Sending and Hosting Universities).

**Language** students (especially Balkan Languages students) could be the first group of exchange students. For example students of Turkish language from Black Sea Universities could come for a period of time to a Turkish University for language practice with (or without) their teachers. After a period of time and successful fulfillment of the training, they will receive credits from their own (sending) University. Of course the two collaborating Universities have to develop a clear collaboration protocol. Another issue for practical training collaboration is **Health Care**. The representatives from Bulgaria informed the meeting that short courses on Health Care and Health Management are already underway in Varna (Bulgaria) and that they could receive students from other BSUN Universities. The specific course could be used as a pilot course to assess the problems and shortcomings of our proposal. Furthermore, similar student exchange activities could be implemented in **Arts** and **Social Sciences**.

It was underlined that such student exchange activities on Language students are already in progress between some Black Sea Universities. Therefore we can use the existing experience and try to enlarge the network of the collaborating Universities. Furthermore, the student exchange rules should be clarified and some administrative issues have to be resolved.

The exchange students have to have full academic status in the host Universities, similar to the regular local students. That means that exchange students should be provided with student card and should have full access to University restaurants, accommodation, reduced fares to Public Transport, etc. Also exchange students should be exempted from payment of fees related to courses given at the host University. After completion of their practical training in the host Universities, the students will receive (in addition to the credits from the sending University) a certification from BSUN for their participation in the program. This certification will improve the attractiveness of the student exchange program.

A last issue concerns the language requirements for student exchange. Exchange students should master the language of the hosting University (for the courses given in that language) or they should master another language used by both student and teachers during the practical training (ex: English, Russian, etc).

## 2. Teaching Staff

For the teaching staff, short visits could be organized (1-2 weeks) for summer of short courses given in the BSUN Universities. However, financing these short visits could be a problem. A possible way of staff mobility could be the promotion of teaching contracts on specific topics that are needed in the host

Universities. In these cases, the hosting University will find the necessary funds to cover the expenses of the exchange teaching staff. For example it was pointed out that there are case of vacancies in some BSUN Universities to teach basic sciences or specialized topics. These vacancies could be covered by exchange teaching staff.

Towards the encouragement of teaching staff mobility among the BSUN Universities, it was proposed to promote exchange of information between the academic staff of the BSUN Universities. An employment page should be added to the web site of BSUN and the collaborating Universities should try to inform all members of the academic community for that new service. Furthermore, the web site of BSUN should develop a link to Student Unions pages of the collaborating Universities.

### 3. Accreditation

It was recognized that there is no automatic mutual recognition of the Diplomas provided by the different Universities of BSUN, although we should try to move towards that direction. However, this is an issue that cannot be resolved by the BSUN alone. As a first step to promote understanding and collaboration between the Universities of the BSUN, it was proposed to organize a Workshop on the “Quality Review Process for Universities”. The main idea is that the collaborating Universities will present the existing systems for University’s evaluation in each country of the BSUN. The results of the Workshop will be disseminated among the collaborating Universities.

### 4. Summer Schools

It was proposed to try to organize Summer Schools in different Universities of the BSUN. The University of the Aegean is willing to host a Summer School on “Environmental Coastal Management” in the island of Lesbos (city of Mytilene). The summer school can be easily organized there, because in Mytilene are located three Departments of the University of the Aegean, which could be actively involved in such a project: the Department of Environmental Studies, the Department of Marine Sciences and the Department of Geography. Furthermore, a post-graduate course (Mastes Degree) on Environmental Policy and Management is already offered by the Department of Environmental Studies. The existing infrastructure could easily support an international Summer School on “Environmental Coastal Management”, with the active collaboration of other Universities of the BSUN.

As a conclusion, the Round Table agreed that the Universities of the BSUN should proceed to specific steps, in order to consolidate their collaboration. We can immediately:

- Continue the exchange of language students (bilateral agreements)
- Create exchange of students on Arts and Social Sciences
- Support the Varna Health Care and Management short courses
- Resolve the status of the exchange students in the host universities
- Develop an employment page in the BSUN web site
- Disseminate the information on the existence of a BSUN web site
- Develop Student Union pages in the BSUN web site
- Organize a Workshop on the “Quality Review Process for Universities” in the different countries of the BSUN
- Support the creation of summer schools (example: “Environmental Coastal Management” in Lesbos island).

## **ROUND TABLE: Research co-operation Programs and Long Distance Learning**

The participants of this round table were: Professor Pavlov (Bulgaria), Professor Klissarova (Bulgaria), Professor Bavaru (Romania), Professor Rosca (Romania), Professor Mamut (Romania), Professor Mamedov (Azerbaijan), Professor Sevuk (Turkey), Professor Tatlidil (Turkey), Professor Vrichea (Greece), Professor Tsapaliki (Greece), Professor Papaioakim (Greece), Dr. Roumboutsou (Greece) and Mrs. Tsapaliki (Greece). Professor Karydis (Greece) was the chairman and Professor Spiro (Albania) was the co-chairman of the meeting.

The chairman asked the participants to express their views and ideas about topics of interest as well as for ways of research co-operation between the Universities of the network.

Professor Mamedov from The Azerbaijan Technical University, proposed a number of interests within the field of technology and engineering. He mentioned the work currently carried out in atmospheric pollution in collaboration with the Middle East Technical University and the Istanbul University. In addition scientific fields such as electrotechnics, telecommunications as well as mechanical systems (computer engineering, information technology, piezotransducers etc) would also be of interest for the Azerbaijan Technical University.

Professor Liksarove speaking on behalf of the Varna University of Medicine stressed the need for developing discussion groups that would bring students as well as lecturing staff together by talking on regional problems with participation from many countries.

Professor Mamut from Romania underlined the importance of the links between universities and local communities. Universities should work on community problems and not to be isolated islands within the community. As far as fund raising is concerned, Professor Mamut claimed that we should not be limited to either NATO or EU funds but also look for local and national funding. National funding can act as "pump primer" to raise further funds from international institutions and organizations. In addition, it was proposed the establishment of small centers of excellence within the BSLTN.

Professor Armenian (Armenia) expressed some reservations about the long distance learning system: the shortcomings according to his opinion lies on the fact that most scientific disciplines are of international interest and therefore, such a long distance learning system should not be linked to a



regional network. On the contrary, it can be useful for subjects of local interests such as environmental problems.

Concerning research collaboration Professor Armenian suggested three objectives: the first objective was to concentrate on the transformation of societies which can refer to social, economic and technological issues. The second objective should aim at improving quality. There are many aspects of quality that can be improved such as medical quality and medical care, business quality, quality control in industry and quality in education. Professor Armenian maintains that improvement of quality standards do not necessarily require more funds and any additional funding may not be serious. The last objective was technology to be pulled on a better level.

Professor Sevuk (Turkey) suggested that research topics with the keyword Black Sea would be most appropriate for finding funds. There are several ongoing joint projects on Black Sea. For example: Ecological modeling of Black Sea; wave forecasting in Black Sea; Monitoring Bio Mass in Black Sea and the three major projects funded generously by NATO. Middle East Technical University is working jointly with Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian Universities in three projects. As a first step three on going projects may be put under the BSUN umbrella and new proposals with additional partners may be prepared.

Albanian representative (Professor Spiro), stressed the need to strengthen the links between research groups or teams in Universities, to make common studies, especially concerning the problems which are interesting for the region. We must prepare projects to publish together the results of studies to be presented in one scientific review of the network. The centers of excellence will be one concretization of this activity.

We must think over together, also, for the D.L. method, to be able to receive each academic course (university or postgraduate) which will be interesting.

Dr. Rouboutsou proposed pilot studies postgraduate programs and Professor Tsapaliki proposed social studies oriented to special groups mostly concerning small groups suffering from social exclusion (a short description is attached). Professor Papaioakim stressed the importance of setting up an internet site in order to distribute ideas and focus for collaboration. This can be a successful approach without much funding, as expenses will be limited mainly to traveling. In addition the regional Greek Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace has built a technological park. This infrastructure can give the opportunity to interested parts to develop collaboration as well as research activities.

Professor Karydis (University of the Aegean) proposed research network and research collaboration in environmental issues. There are three Departments in the University working on environmental problems; the Department of Environmental Sciences, Department of Geography and Department of Marine Sciences.

The last part of the meeting was devoted to fund raising and financing of research activities. Professor Spiro stressed the importance of the "stability pact" that can be beneficial for the Balkan countries, since EU finances all sorts of activities that strengthen political stability of the Balkan countries. Also the INTEREG program can be useful for a number of countries from the BSUN network that is Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey. It was also mentioned again the importance of funding from local and national sources.