

**B O V A U n i v e r s i t y**  
**S t r a t e g y 2 0 0 6 - 2 0 0 8**

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## Background

BOVA (The Baltic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University) was established in 1996. In period 1996-2000, BOVA actively participated in the NOVABA programme with focus on short MSc courses in the Baltic universities which gave a strong base for further development of cooperation among Baltic agricultural and veterinary universities. BOVA secretariat with one full time position was established in June 2002 and continues its activities.

A few brand new activities in BOVA member universities occurred in 2002-2003. Established networks in different scientific disciplinary areas had arranged meetings and discussions, working group for joint MSc programmes elaborated a common understanding on Master programs among Baltic agricultural universities. Significant steps were done to initiate joint applications with Nordic and other international partners to external donors with specific emphasis on coordination of projects from Baltic side.

A deep and critical review and analysis of ongoing processes was done of all BOVA university network activities in the frame of self-evaluation and external evaluation of NOVA-BOVA cooperation experienced. Notably self-evaluation report showed that organisational set-up on the BOVA side still lags behind NOVA, primarily due to the absence of a strategy and the lack of an organisational link between strategic decision-making and operational levels. This implies necessity to start a strategy development for further network development and activities.

## Vision

BOVA is a connecting network for member universities aimed to strengthen higher education in agriculture, forestry and veterinary in the Baltic region and on the EU arena. It primarily introduces innovative study methods and studies in English language. Strong academic networks running their educational projects make a core of BOVA university network. The name “BOVA” plays a positive role for external donors funding different joint activities in the network.

## Mission

**Advanced high quality studies in English for advanced Baltic and especially visiting students.**

BOVA is providing a base for active cooperation among Baltic agricultural and veterinary universities seeking a new quality in the study process and primarily focusing to development of studies in English language for local and especially visiting students. Every teacher is provided with suitable environment to develop his/her personal competences related to teaching in English language and using modern teaching methods.

## **Benefits to partners**

The cooperation in the frame of the BOVA University network is beneficial for member universities at least in these points:

- Consolidation of scientific and educational areas with English speaking teachers and researchers to get sufficient critical mass for international projects, providing them Nordic and Russian partners;
- Development of quality in studies at member universities through increasing competences of teachers, forcing development of studies in English and thus giving a base to attract more international students (Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus further are key targets) to the Baltic universities;
- Increasing competitiveness of member universities on national and international arena;
- Members of BOVA network are more proficient partners for cooperation with relevant organisations outside Baltic States and primarily with NOVA University Network;

## **Strategic objectives 2006-2008**

### ***Seven objectives***

BOVA University will focus on seven strategic objectives during forthcoming three year period 2006-2008:

1. Facilitate teacher and student mobility inside the Baltic States and attract Nordic students to Baltic countries; make the Baltic universities more attractive for Erasmus students; prepare more subjects in English language. Develop quality assurance process for prepared international courses.
2. Promote the use of e-based learning in the joint international study programs and joint courses in order to increase quality of study process with further objective to provide good quality international courses at reduced cost;
3. Develop a training system for academics involved in teaching process at member universities. Focus to young English speaking teachers graduating their doctoral studies;
4. Initiate external fund raising in the form of international educational projects appropriate to points 1, 2 and 3 above.
5. Continue cooperation with NOVA University Network which is considered as reliable partner outside the Baltic region. Develop links between joint Baltic study programs (projects) and joint Nordic programs (projects).
6. Develop a system of indicators to evaluate the progress of different activities in the BOVA network;
7. Achieve the recognition of BOVA network in the Baltic region.

## ***Priority areas for cooperation***

### **In terms of activities**

BOVA network focus on:

- master studies;
- doctoral studies and research training;
- exchanges in practical training of bachelor students

### **In terms of joint educational topics**

The most successful and promising areas in the BOVA network for the end of 2005 were:

- agro-ecology and organic agriculture;
- bioinformatics;
- forest policy;
- management of biodiversity and functional landscapes;
- veterinary medicine focusing on animal reproduction.

The BOVA University focuses to further development of these areas. However, new initiatives from academic people at member universities (“bottom to top” approach) are always welcome and may be included to the list above if the BOVA Coordination Committee considers them of strategic importance.

### **Process supporting activities**

A number of general areas supporting all activities are included into prioritised activities in order to secure successful development of joint activities in academic networks:

- rising competences of academic staff;
- implementation of Bologna process in member universities;
- development of joint distance learning based on e-learning methods and use of ICT means;
- finding the tools to promote teacher and students participation in BOVA activities.

## ***The tasks to achieve defined objectives***

### **Increasing mobility of master and doctoral students and Baltic teachers**

Following key tasks shall be implemented to achieve increasing internal BOVA and external mobility of students:

- Development of strong and visible **academic networks**, able to provide studies in English language. Linking them to relevant Nordic partners to get sufficient critical mass for applications to external donors;
- Continuation of intensive master courses and making them permanent by turning to larger modules (incorporating to curricula at home university) and preferably suitable for joint master programs;
- Initiation of joint courses of high quality in common areas for Doctoral students (e.g. Scientific Writing, Biometry, Research Methodology, etc.)

- Supporting cooperation among young researches (potential teachers), e.g. conferences;
- organisation of student exchanges in practical training
- cooperation in the NOVA-BOVA network in the field of Doctoral courses and attraction of courses to be organised in Baltic countries giving wider access of Baltic teachers and students to these courses.

### **E-learning tools**

The following key tasks should be implemented to achieve a new quality in study process using e-based methods:

- implementation of e-based tools, making them used in the groups providing joint courses;
- teaching the teachers to use innovative teaching tools (e-learning) and modern methods;
- giving new quality to distance learning part in joint courses.

### **Training system for academic staff**

The following key tasks should be implemented to achieve the defined objective:

- define mostly demanded topics by Baltic teachers;
- search for competent experts and organise short courses and seminars for Baltic teachers;
- combine teacher training with NOVA University Network providing joint courses in the Baltic States thus giving larger access to Baltic participants.

### **System of indicators for progress evaluation**

The following key indicators may be used to assess the progress of activity of academic networks:

- ongoing and active project (internal, preparation of application, funded by external donor or from internal funds);
- number of students in the activity;
- number of actively participating teachers;
- international accreditation of joint master program;
- number of meetings and available activity plan at least one year in advance.

### **Recognition at member universities by academic staff and outside by society**

- providing of information to academic society and increasing functionality of BOVA webpage;
- publicising success stories and examples of good practise, distributing this information at member universities and for society.

### **Cooperation with NOVA UN**

- Continue with cooperation in the NOVA-BOVA network, keep permanent contacts with NOVA secretariat;
- Develop the joint NOVA-BOVA strategy.

## **Finances**

Funds for the BOVA University activities are provided by two basic ways:

- internal, through annual contributions from every member university;
- external, submitting applications to external donors from academic networks and from secretariat.

Academic networks are supported by home universities and by the BOVA secretariat when applying to external donors. Project leaders are encouraged to take responsibility for submitting applications and coordinate projects from the Baltic side.

## **Partners on international arena**

The NOVA University Network remains the major partner for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. The BOVA University participate actively in building and developing of NOVA-BOVA network which represents higher agricultural, forestry and veterinary studies in the Northern Baltic Sea region.

Partners from other EU countries as well as cooperation with other networks and mega-networks is carried out at project basis keeping and promoting BOVA or NOVA-BOVA identity when most of member universities participate in the project and especially if project is coordinated from Baltic side.

BOVA network is open for cooperation on project basis with neighbour countries: Northwest Russia and Kaliningrad area, Byelorussia. An expansion of BOVA University network is not foreseen for the period covered by the strategy.

There are no restrictions for Member Universities to develop their own international activity in parallel or the same areas as the BOVA University network is engaged.

*The BOVA University Strategy 2006-2008 is approved by the BOVA Rector Board in the meeting in January 12, 2006.*