

Approved by BOVA Rectors' Board in the meeting in Jelgava, February 5, 2009



**BOVA UNIVERSITY NETWORK
STRATEGY**

for the period of 2009-2011

Jelgava, 2009

BACKGROUND

BOVA (The Baltic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University) was established in 1996 with the main idea to build up and strengthen academic collaboration as well as mobility and exchange of experience among BOVA member universities, namely, the Lithuanian University of Agriculture, the Lithuanian Veterinary Academy, the Estonian University of Life Sciences and the Latvia University of Agriculture. At the end of 2008 BOVA was renamed the BOVA University Network (BOVA UN).

The first successful activities were performed by BOVA in close cooperation with NOVA UN through the NOVABA programme. This programme worked in the period of 1996-2000 and focused mainly on short MSc courses in the Baltic universities performed by NOVA UN academic staff and gave a strong basis for further development of cooperation among BOVA universities and good practice of fulfillment of joint tasks.

The next period in BOVA development was marked by the project founded by K&A Wallenberg foundation started from 2001 with the aim to develop administrative capacities in BOVA. The BOVA Secretariat was established in June 2002 and continues its activities aimed at initiating and coordinating activities within the BOVA network. During the period of 2002-2004, besides building administrative bodies and introduction of new collaborative culture, a lot of joint internal and external projects were initiated and performed focusing on joint master education, joint international PhD courses, teacher training and development of academic competences.

Starting from the year 2005 BOVA has been defined as a persistent network having well developed and functioning administrative structures and clearly defined objectives, tasks and activities and supported by its own internal funding. The first BOVA Strategy was developed during 2005 and approved at the beginning of 2006 by the BOVA Rectors' Board for the period of 2006-2009.

Implementing the strategic tasks of BOVA UN the cooperation agreement between NOVA University Network and BOVA University Network was signed on October 21, 2008 giving new challenges for further collaboration and development.

BOVA University Network has reached the results that one can be proud of. A lot has been done but still much more should be done to survive in the modern world of changes. One of the reliable ways is to develop further, be innovative and creative. The achievement of these tasks to a great extent depends on the support of each network member.

The review and analysis of ongoing processes were carried out for all BOVA University Network activities in the framework of self-evaluation and conclusions. Recommendations have been introduced in the BOVA University Network Strategy for the period of 2009-2011.

VISION

BOVA UN is a widely known and recognised regional network of four Baltic universities that provides joint international high quality education in agriculture, forestry and veterinary to Baltic and international students and training basis for academic staff.

MISSION

BOVA UN through its organisational units is looking for potential cooperation areas to initiate joint international education, support the development of teaching staff competences at the same time supporting them by all the necessary tools and resources, thus providing a stable platform for academic staff activities.

BOVA UN implementing its mission aimed at achieving the defined objectives, proceeds with the following values:

- respect between partners at all levels;
- activities aimed at bringing mutual benefits to students, teaching and administrative staff;
- respect to the teachers and recognition of their job in the BOVA framework and at the universities' level.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The BOVA University Network strategy for 2009-2011 outlines the main objectives and tasks for the period, basing on the experience gained over the period of the previous 12 years and recognizing the needs of the current situation. Annual action plans will be developed on the basis of this strategy:

1. Development of Joint Master Education.
2. Development of Doctoral courses and research training.
3. Teacher training and development of academic competence.
4. Use of modern IT means in implementation of BOVA activities.
5. Support of academic networks developing and organizing international courses.
6. Strengthening cooperation with NOVA University network and other networks and organizations.

THE TASKS TO ACHIEVE THE DEFINED OBJECTIVES:

*** Development of Joint Master Education**

The main BOVA UN activities are the joint intensive Master courses and the joint international Master programmes. These activities are recognizable and they attract BOVA and international students.

1. Intensive Master courses.

Basing on long experience in the development and offering international Master courses and having a good practice, BOVA UN has adopted a joint model of BIMC (BOVA

Intensive Master Course). The courses are initiated, planned and performed by academic networks or single individuals at participating member institutions with great assistance of BOVA coordinators on organizational level. BOVA stimulates the continuation of the present successful courses and development of new courses stressing the importance of raising quality.

Tasks:

- a) *Each member institution organizes two or one intensive master courses per year.*
- b) *Develop and implement the pilot full e-learning course.*
- c) *Search for mobility sources for students and teachers participating in the courses.*
- d) *Market BOVA courses to other interested partners, thus making more international student groups.*
- e) *Develop the quality assurance system by all member institutions.*

2. Joint International Master programs.

Starting from the year 2004, BOVA UN has started the process of research, development and implementation of Joint programmes on Master level. One of the academic networks has succeeded to develop a full 2- year master programme "Management of biodiversity and multifunctional landscapes" by joint efforts of BOVA UN under the leadership of the Estonian University of Life Sciences. The intention of BOVA UN is to run this jointly developed Master programme and to search for possible external funding for other initiated programmes.

Tasks:

- a) *Run the jointly developed master programme "Management of biodiversity and multifunctional landscapes" ensuring the quality performance by all the involved parties.*
- b) *Market the existing jointly developed master programme for wide international students' world.*
- c) *Search for possible mobility sources for students interested in participation in this programme fully or partly.*
- d) *Study the needs and possibilities to develop further the initiated master programmes or search for new areas for joint master programmes.*

*** Development of Doctoral courses and research training**

Starting from the year 2006, BOVA started to develop BIDC (BOVA Intensive Doctoral course) basing on great experience obtained from NOVA side. In order to offer high quality courses recognizable on international level, BOVA UN will continue the development of BIDC.

Tasks:

- a) *Each member university initiates, develops and organizes at least one PhD course per year.*
- b) *Involvement of top level professionals outside BOVA in the teaching team is necessary to obtain high quality course.*
- c) *Marketing of the developed courses within NOVA and to other interested institutions/universities.*

d) Widely popularizing the research conferences at the BOVA member universities through BOVA administrative channels.

*** Teacher training and development of academic competence**

Recognizing the need to raise the competence of academic staff at member universities, BOVA is constantly looking for the opportunities to offer courses in modern pedagogy, use of ICT in higher education, research methodology and presentation of research results or scientific writing. These activities have reached the highest popularity in recent years. It also serves as a motivation tool for these teachers in the future to develop joint activities or teach in the BOVA international courses. BOVA UN has foreseen to continue this action.

Tasks:

- a) Offer at least one course per year for teachers' education.*
- b) Search for competent experts and attract highly professional lecturers for the course.*
- c) Offer seminars or conferences for administrative staff.*

*** Use of modern IT means in implementation of BOVA activities**

To be attractive and innovative BOVA UN recognizes the need to make even greater effort towards the development of e-learning, as it could have double effect: attracting more students and reducing the course expenses.

Tasks:

- a) Active support to the established BOVA e-learning Working Group;*
- b) Develop and adopt the quality requirements for e-learning courses;*
- c) Use of suitable e-learning environment in the activities;*
- d) Training of teaching staff acting in the BOVA activities by e-learning specialists at home institutions;*
- e) Preparation of materials and assistance of e-learning part;*
- f) Develop the motivation system for teaching staff to use e-learning environment;*
- f) Continue to develop and implement a strong, qualitative distance learning part and/or e-learning in the offered courses, reaching the reduction of necessary funds for mobility.*

*** Support of academic networks developing and organizing international courses**

Strong academic networks running their educational projects form the core of the BOVA University Network. The partners of at least three member institutions shall take part in the BOVA network. BOVA UN recognizes the importance of partnership in other academic networks such as Nordic academic networks or other international academic networks. This activity should be developed; therefore BOVA UN has set the following **tasks:**

- a) Develop a clear policy for recognition of academic networks by all member institutions.*

- b) *Find the motivation tools for participation in different academic networks oriented towards the activities fitting in the BOVA UN strategy.*
- c) *Search for the possibilities to extend other academic networks (e.g. NOVA networks) or participate in the development of new academic networks.*

*** Cooperation outside BOVA UN**

The BOVA UN from the beginning has had very close cooperation with the NOVA UN, which helped in creation, development and running of BOVA activities. It is obvious, that BOVA prioritizes NOVA UN as a major partner in further collaboration and intends to strengthen this collaboration. BOVA University Network is open for cooperation on project basis with other countries. But the enlargement of the BOVA University network is not foreseen in this strategic period.

Tasks:

- a) *Annually to work out a joint activity plan with NOVA UN aiming at the implementation of the items stated in the Cooperation agreement between NOVA University network and BOVA University network ;*
- b) *Actively working towards the initiation of joint activities with NOVA UN on Master and Doctoral level;*
- c) *Stimulate the mobility of students and teachers using Nordplus funding between BOVA UN and NOVA UN;*
- d) *Use of Lifelong programme (ERASMUS) bilateral agreements for the benefit of BOVA activities implementation;*
- e) *Evaluate cooperation proposals coming from other countries and institutions and develop those which are adequate to the BOVA UN strategy.*

Funding

The BOVA University Network runs its activities based on:

- Internal funds: annual member fee from each institution agreed every year by BOVA Rectors' Board (these funds go mainly for administrative needs) plus each member institution's financial contribution to the implementation of agreed BOVA activities;
- External funds, obtained by project applications to external donors submitted by the BOVA Secretariat or by academic networks or single member university. These funds are raised for the implementation of activities and searching for such funds will be continued. For realization of all the strategic objectives both types of funds at BOVA UN will be used and the following tasks are set:

Tasks:

- a) *Revise the annual member fees for BOVA UN budget.*
- b) *Apply to available sources for external funds for the development of BOVA activities and their implementation.*
- c) *Allocate some funds in BOVA UN budget for e-learning system development.*
- d) *Introduce a course fee for non-BOVA students in BOVA courses.*