

**Approved by BOVA RB on February 3, 2012**



**BOVA UNIVERSITY NETWORK**

**STRATEGY**

**2012 - 2014**

**JELGAVA 2012**

## **BACKGROUND**

BOVA University Network (The Baltic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University Network) was established in 1996 with the main idea to build up and strengthen academic collaboration as well as mobility and experience exchange among Baltic universities providing higher education and research in the fields of life sciences. Four member institutions form BOVA UN, namely: the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU), the Latvia University of Agriculture (LLU), Aleksandras Stulginskis University (ASU) and the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences - Veterinary Academy (LSMU-VA).

The first 10 years BOVA activities were performed by BOVA in close cooperation with NOVA UN through the NOVABA programme firstly and later realizing K&A Wallenberg foundation project and a range of projects developed by academic networks. All activities in BOVA were focused mainly on development short MSc courses, joint master education, joint international PhD courses, teacher training and development of academic competences. 10 years of experience gave a strong basis for further development of trustful cooperation among BOVA universities and good practice of fulfillment of joint tasks.

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. At the same time BOVA continuing to search for external sources based on project activities which could lead to the development of international higher education in the fields of life sciences and strengthening of international competitiveness of each involved party.

Gained experiences of Baltic collaboration through the years in the field of higher education of agriculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, environmental and other related sciences showed that introduction of common higher education space is challenging task which couldn't be reached alone by single university therefore the BOVA cooperation as the stable platform for facilitating the internationalization and introduction of cross border higher education have a vital importance for further development of involved institutions.

This Strategy is developed based on overview and analysis of BOVA cooperation during the years and summing up the new initiatives in order to meet today's institutional development needs and bring benefit to all involved parties on all levels.

## **VISION**

***BOVA University Network is a recognized network of Baltic region universities that develops high educational and research standards and serves the students, scientists and academic staff as a platform for wide international collaboration and increases competitiveness in all member institutions.***

## **MISSION**

*BOVA University Network promotes the cooperation between the partner universities and enhances joint international high quality research and education in agriculture, forestry, veterinary and food sciences, engineering, rural economics and other related sciences based on strong international academic staff collaboration and fostering cooperation with partners outside the Baltic States.*

### **Key objectives**

The BOVA University Network strategy for 2012-2014 outlines main areas for cooperation and tasks for the period based on gained experience of previous 15 years and recognizing the needs of current situation.

The strategy itself determines long term activities within the Action Plan annually.

### **Priority areas for strategic period:**

#### **1. BOVA academic networks**

Educational activities strongly relies on the academic staff of each member institution. Academic staff of various departments, institutions, faculties has cooperation traditions over the years and different levels of joint activities. BOVA is providing common policies between member universities enabling academic staff using BOVA umbrella for further development of institutional cooperation, which may lead to joint educational activities like Master and Doctoral courses. BOVA serves as the platform and offers the opportunity for academic networks or individual teachers to raise their international competence by offering BOVA activities to international students. Networks are encouraged for development of the joint programs. Modern IT means and tools foreseen to be used inside and between the networks widely.

### **Tasks**

- 1.1. Make promotion of BOVA benefits to academic staff on departmental level and ensure academic recognition of incentive of academic staff in BOVA activities at member institutions;
- 1.2. Create the database of BOVA academic networks willing to act internationally;
- 1.3. Provide academic networks with common “get together” IT based platform and platform for open peer reviewed educational materials;
- 1.4. Assist BOVA academic networks to realize their project ideas by searching possible external sources and ways of implementation.

#### **2. Development of International Master Education**

BOVA works towards the creation of international master education aiming for joint Master programs. BOVA Intensive Master Courses have a major role in this development. Perspective areas for joint study programs could be identified.

The BOVA courses are initiated, planned and performed by academic networks at participating member institutions with great assistance of BOVA coordinators on organizational level. BOVA stimulates the continuation of present successful courses and the development of new courses stressing the importance of quality and wide use of e-learning tools.

### **Tasks**

- 2.1. Annually provide at least 10 short term intensive courses (BIMC), 2-3 at each member institution with the exception for LSMU-VA 1-2 courses.
- 2.2. To use blended learning method in majority of offered Master courses using each member institution Moodle environment.
- 2.3. To investigate possible options on enlarging single intensive courses for carrying out study modules in certain study programs.
- 2.4. Establish a WG on Joint Master Education to investigate the perspective areas for joint master programs and work out the framework of development of joint programs according to existing national regulations.
- 2.5. Initiate at least one Joint Master Program aimed for the wide international students' audience.
- 2.6. Improve MSC courses recognition policies at member institutions.

### **3. Cooperation within Doctoral education**

Starting from 2006 BOVA begin to develop B IDC (BOVA Intensive Doctoral courses). In order to offer high quality courses recognizable on international level BOVA UN will continue the development of B IDC, however, BOVA will lay a great emphasis on the possibilities for more strong cooperation with NOVA UN which has great experience in offering high level PhD courses in various subjects. Besides PhD course development the other ways of cooperation has great importance such as joint supervising, scientific publications etc.

### **Tasks**

- 3.1. Annually provide at least 1 or 2 BOVA Doctoral courses on general topics ensuring seed money;
- 3.2. Discuss possible options for joining NOVA PhD courses by bringing Baltic dimension into it with NOVA Board;
- 3.3. Intend to organize PhD specialized courses in cooperation with NOVA;
- 3.4. Ensure the participation of BOVA doctoral students in NOVA PhD courses (at least 20 students per year);
- 3.5. Continue to advertise the organization of NOVA PhD courses at BOVA member institutions explaining the benefits for all involved sides and assist in organizational part.
- 3.6. Develop and support the co-supervising system between Baltic universities on PhD education.
- 3.7. Spread the information about international scientific conferences taking place in each BOVA member institutions to other BOVA partners.

- 3.8. Create and introduce common IT based platform for continuous peer reviewed of doctoral students' international scientific papers.
- 3.9. Promote cooperation options with NJF.
- 3.10. Establish Working Group for further Development of Doctoral Education in BOVA member institutions.

#### **4. Internal cooperation**

In recent years each BOVA member institution has been forced for rapid international development in order to keep up with high international standards. Recently there are study programs developed in English language of instruction at each BOVA member university and the promotion of these programs to the international students as well the realization of studies keeping high quality standards with international dimension is significantly important. BOVA cooperation may help each involved party to fulfill the stated internal tasks for the internationalization of the institution.

##### **Tasks**

- 4.1. Develop a system for the exchange of the teaching staff between BOVA member institutions ensuring at least a flow of 2 - 3 visiting lecturers for longer as one-week period, if lack of staff at home institutions.
- 4.2. Introduce and promote high level topic open lectures on various levels to the students at other BOVA member institutions, possible as well in e-form;
- 4.3. Concentrate the institutional and faculty cooperation on the evaluation of the existing curricula and exchange of good practice.
- 4.4. Promote cooperation between students through the joint activities of Student Unions or similar.
- 4.5. Increase mobility exchange of students and staff between BOVA member institutions using other programme opportunities, e.g. ERASMUS student and teachers' exchange.

#### **5. Broadening the external cooperation**

NOVA UN will remain the main partner for external cooperation, continuing long traditions established from the beginning in 1996 and followed by the Cooperation agreement between NOVA UN and BOVA UN signed in 2008.

BOVA cooperation with other institutions and networks is based on project activities. However the development of educational projects within different international programs such as NORDPLUS, ERASMUS IP, ERASMUS MUNDUS, TEMPUS and others have high importance.

##### **Tasks**

- 5.1. Renew the cooperation agreement between NOVA UN and BOVA UN including new initiatives corresponding to the mutual needs;
- 5.2. Keep the strong cooperation between the related BOVA and NOVA organizational units (Boards, KUF & CC; Secretariats, NSF & BSC);

- 5.3. Continue to participate in joint NOVA/BOVA Nordplus network and implement projects developed by this network;
- 5.4. Invite NOVA member institutions as partners in future International projects (ERASMUS IP, ERASMUS MUNDUS etc.);
- 5.5. Develop at least 1 ERASMUS IP per year having broad partnership outside BOVA;
- 5.6. Search for the possibilities to initiate or participate in ERASMUS MUNDUS partnership projects establishing cooperation with universities from third countries.
- 5.7. Be open for invitations to project partnerships and pay attention to the project's development in cooperation with third countries.
- 5.8. Look for other possible ways of cooperation with other networks or projects of interest.

## **6. Visibility**

BOVA needs to be visible among academic staff and students inside and outside BOVA. Both local and international staff and students are essential target groups regardless of the number of provided activities. BOVA webpage is used as a basis for the information flow. However, local institutional information dissemination means could be used for other ways of marketing BOVA.

### **Tasks**

- 6.1. Keep the information on BOVA webpage updated and put links to BOVA webpage on the webpages of home institutions; spread the BOVA newsletters at least 1 per month;
- 6.2. Write articles in possible media about the activities within BOVA;
- 6.3. BOVA Student Council assisting in BOVA promotion among students;
- 6.4. Issue BOVA promotional materials;
- 6.5. To use all possible modern internet technologies and social media for information dissemination;
- 6.6. Improve advertising system on offered BOVA and NOVA courses among BOVA students.

### **Funding**

The BOVA University Network runs its activities based on:

*Internal funds*: annual membership fee from each institution agreed every year by BOVA Rectors' Board and each member institution's financial contribution to the implementation of agreed BOVA activities;

*External funds*, obtained by project applications to external donors submitted by BOVA Secretariat or by a single member university. These funds are raised for separate activities. BOVA UN will continue seeking for such funds.

For the realization of all strategic objectives both types of funds at BOVA UN will be used and the following tasks are placed:

- Annually revise the possibility for the enlargement of BOVA UN budget based on the annual membership fee.

- Apply for available external funds to develop and implement BOVA activities.

### **Organizational setup**

BOVA UN has a certain organizational structure stated in the Statutes of BOVA for the implementation of the tasks raised to achieve the BOVA strategic objectives. In 2008 BOVA WG of e-learning specialists was additionally included in the organizational structure to ensure the introduction of IT tools introduction into BOVA activities. In 2010 BOVA UN established a BOVA Students Council to ensure the student's perspective in BOVA joint actions.

For the strategic period of 2012 – 2014 BOVA has an intention to the following:

- Revise existing BOVA organizational structure and the tasks of each unit respectively;
- Establish Working Groups that are essential for the further development like WG for Joint Master Education or WG for the development of Doctoral education and other.
- Determinate BOVA Students Council role in BOVA activities and supply them with necessary tools.

### **Responsibility for the implementing the Strategy**

BOVA Rectors' Board approving the Strategy for certain period and responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Strategy can be envisaged only within the framework of agreed BOVA cooperation. BOVA rectors Board is responsible for making clear political decisions and statements with secured internal finances in order to meet Strategy implementation needs.

BOVA Strategy should be integrated in each member institutions' strategic plans and each member institution ensures its implementation.

Once a year the BOVA Secretariat informing BOVA Rectors' Board about the implementation of Strategy. After its evaluation RB can decide on specifying the strategic plan, if that is necessary.

Appendix 1 "Results of BOVA UN activities for achieving strategic objectives, 2012-2014 " is integral part of this Strategy.

## Results of BOVA UN activities for achieving strategic objectives, 2012-2014

No.	Field	Indicator	Financing	Outcomes		
				2012	2013	2014
<b>Master level studies</b>						
1.	Intensive Master Courses	Number of courses	BOVA, Nordplus pr. projects	8	11	12
2.	E-learning tools integration to the courses	Courses have developed and introduced distance part using e-learning tools	Internal BOVA member institutions	60 %	80 %	90 %
3.	Long term courses (up to 10 working days)	Number of courses	ERASMUS IP	1	2	3
4.	Identification of areas for joint Master programs	Survey and evaluation report on priority areas for development of joint studies	BOVA	Survey 1	Report 1	-
5.	Joint Master programs	Worked out project proposal on JP	Possible external sources: Nordplus, ERASMUS MUNDUS, other	-	-	1
6.	Mobility of BOVA students	Number of students participated in BOVA courses	Nordplus, BOVA	120	165	180
7.	Mobility of international students	Number of NOVA students and other students outside BOVA participated in BOVA courses	Nordplus, other sources	10 %	15 %	20 %
<b>Doctoral education</b>						
8.	Intensive Doctoral Courses	Number of courses	BOVA, internal member institutions	1	2	2
9.	NOVA PhD course organized at BOVA member institutions	Number of courses	NOVA, internal member institutions	1	2	2



10.	Joint NOVA/BOVA courses	Development of proposal, number of courses	NOVA, BOVA	Proposal, discussions	1	1
11.	Mobility of BOVA students	Number of students participated in BOVA courses	BOVA internal member institutions	15	30	30
12.	Mobility of BOVA students	Number of students participated in NOVA PhD courses	BOVA internal member institutions	20	25	30
<b>Academic development</b>						
13.	Academic networks	Number of initiated academic networks performing BOVA activates	BOVA	8	10	12
14.	Short term mobility of teachers	Number of teaching staff involved in performing BOVA and NOVA activities	BOVA, NORDPLUS, ERASMUS	30	40	50
15.	Long term mobility of teachers	Number of teaching staff as visiting lecturers at BOVA member institutions	Internal member institutions	2	4	8
16.	Open lecturing	Number of courses opened for international students at member institutions	Internal member institution	2	3	4
<b>Institutional development</b>						
17.	Internal curriculum evaluation and development	Meetings of responsible persons (study program directors, dean of faculties etc.)	Internal member institution	2	4	5
18.	Cooperation of Structural Units	Different structural units' workshops (ex. Student Unions)	Internal member institution	1	2	3
<b>International development</b>						
19.	Openness to the international partnership	Number of cooperation agreements		1	1	2
20.	International projects - coordinators	Initiation of joint projects within deferent programs like ERASMUS IP, NORDPLUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS etc.	BOVA internal	1	2	3

21.	International projects - partners	Participation in joint project within deferent programs like ERASMUS IP, NORDPLUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS etc.	BOVA internal	2	4	6
<b>IT resource support</b>						
22.	Further development of Moodle platform for BOVA activities	Separate platforms at each member institution or joint platform	BOVA internal, possible external support	Home institutions Moodle platform for BOVA needs	Discussions on need of joint platform	1 joint platform
23.	BOVA webpage	Information update	BOVA internal	weekly	weekly	weekly
24.	BOVA newsletter	Information dissemination source	BOVA internal	monthly	monthly	monthly