



BOVA UNIVERSITY NETWORK

STRATEGY

2015 – 2020

KAUNAS, 2015

BACKGROUND

THE BOVA University Network (The Baltic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University Network) was established in 1996 with the main idea of building up and strengthening 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 Latvian University of Agriculture (LLU), Aleksandras Stulginskis University (ASU) and the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences - Veterinary Academy (LSMU-VA).

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

Starting from the year 2005 BOVA has been defined as an established 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 has continued 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 the international competitiveness of each involved party.

Experiences gained from Baltic collaboration through the years in higher education in the fields of agriculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, environmental and other related sciences, showed that the introduction of a common higher education space is challenging task which could not be reached alone by a single university, therefore the BOVA cooperation as a stable platform for facilitating the internationalization and introduction of cross-border higher education has a vital importance in the further development of the institutions involved.

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

VISION

BOVA UN is a widely known and recognised regional network of four Baltic HEI that provides joint international high quality education in agriculture, forestry, veterinary, food, engineering, rural economics and other related sciences, based on strong international academic staff collaboration.

MISSION

Share knowledge among the life science universities of the Baltic States, **Create** knowledge through European scholarship in teaching and research, **Apply knowledge** to improve the quality of life in the the rural society environment.

Key objectives

The BOVA University Network strategy for 2015-2015 outlines the main areas for cooperation and tasks for the period based on experience gained over the previous 15 years and recognizing the needs of the current situation.

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

Share knowledge among the life sciences universities of the Baltic States

Aim - BOVA academic networks

Educational activities strongly rely on the academic staff of each member institution. Academic staff of various departments, institutions, faculties have a tradition of cooperation s over the years and different levels of joint activities. BOVA is providing common policies between the member universities these enable academic staff to use the BOVA umbrella for further development of institutional cooperation, which may lead to joint educational activities such as Master and Doctoral courses/seminars. BOVA serves as a platform and offers the opportunity for academic networks, or individual teachers, to improve their international competence by offering BOVA activities to international students. Networks are encouraged to move their development forward towards joint programmes and use modern IT means and tools within and between networks effectively.

Objectives

- 1.1. Promote BOVA benefits to academic staff at departmental level and ensure academic recognition of incentive of academic staff in BOVA activities at member institutions;
- 1.2. Create a database of BOVA academic networks willing to act internationally;
- 1.3. Provide academic networks with a 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 for possible external sources and methods of implementation.

Aim - Development of International Masters Education

BOVA works towards the creation of international masters education aiming for joint Masters programmes. BOVA Intensive Masters Courses have a major role in this development. Potential areas for joint study programmess could be identified, starting from a single Masters course and continuing with the module system.

The BOVA courses are initiated, planned and executed by academic networks at participating member institutions with the assistance of BOVA coordinators at the

organizational level. BOVA stimulates the continuation of successful courses and the development of new courses, stressing the importance of quality and the wide use of e-learning tools.

Objectives

- 2.1. Annually provide at least eight short-term intensive courses (BIMC), 2-3 at each member institution, with the exception for LSMU-VA which should have 1-2 courses.
- 2.2. To use the blended learning method in the majority of Master courses offered, using each member institution's Moodle environment.
- 2.3. Research possible options for building up study modules in specific study programmes.
- 2.4. Establish a Faculties' meeting platform for Joint Masters Education to investigate the potential areas for joint master programmes and produce a framework for the development of JP according to existing national regulations.
- 2.5. Initiate at least one Joint Masters Programme aimed at the wide international student audience.

Create knowledge through European scholarship in teaching and research

Aim - Cooperation within Doctoral education

Starting from 2006 BOVA began to develop BIDC (BOVA Intensive Doctoral courses). In order to offer high quality courses recognised at the international level, BOVA UN will continue the development of BIDC, however, BOVA will lay great emphasis on the possibilities of joining the NOVA UN, which has great experience in offering high level PhD courses in various subjects. In addition to PhD course development, other means of cooperation shall also be encouraged, such as joint supervising, co-authorship of scientific publications etc.

Objectives

- 3.1. Annually provide at least one or two BOVA Doctoral courses on general topics, ensuring seed money for this, and offer Erasmus+ support for PhD students.
- 3.2. Discuss possible options for joining NOVA PhD courses by incorporating a Baltic dimension through the NOVA Board;
- 3.3. Ensure the participation of BOVA doctoral students in NOVA PhD courses (at least five students per year);
- 3.4. Continue to advertise the organization of NOVA PhD courses at each of the BOVA member institutions, explaining the benefits for all sides involved and assist in administration.
- 3.5. Spread the information about international scientific conferences taking place in each BOVA member institutions to the other BOVA partners.
- 3.6. Create the possibility to choose "open" PhD courses at any BOVA university for PhD students, by using the MOODLE platform or face to face meetings. Develop a system for the exchange of teaching staff ensuring high level PhD courses.

Aim - Internal cooperation

In recent years each BOVA member institution has been forced into rapid international development in order to keep up with high international standards. Recently study programmes have been developed using English as the language of instruction at each BOVA member university. The promotion of these programmes to international students, as well as keeping high quality standards of scholarship, with an international dimension is of high importance. BOVA cooperation may help each party involved to fulfill the stated internal tasks for the internationalization of the institution.

Objectives

- 4.1. Develop a system for the exchange of teaching staff between BOVA member institutions, ensuring a flow of at least 2 - 3 visiting lecturers for longer than a one-week period, if there is lack of appropriately skilled staff at home institutions.
- 4.2. Introduce and promote high level topic open lectures at various levels to the students of other BOVA member institutions, these could possibly be delivered in e-form;
- 4.3. Concentrate the institutional and faculty cooperation regarding the existing national curricula and exchange of good practice.
- 4.4. Increase mobility exchange of students and staff between BOVA member institutions using other programme opportunities, e.g. ERASMUS+ student and teachers' exchange.

Apply knowledge to improve the quality of life in the rural society environment.

Aim - Broadening 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 programmes such as NORDPLUS and ERASMUS+ and others have high importance.

Objectives

- 5.1. Renew the cooperation agreement between NOVA UN and BOVA UN, including new initiatives corresponding to mutual needs;
- 5.2. Retain the strong cooperation between the related BOVA and NOVA organizational units (Boards, KUF & CC; Secretariats, NSF & BSC);
- 5.3. Continue to participate in the joint NOVA/BOVA Nordplus network and implement projects developed by this network;
- 5.4. Join other international networks such as ICA or IROICA, using their platforms to disseminate information about BOVA;

- 5.5. Be open to invitations to project partnerships, and give attention to project development in cooperation with eastern countries.
- 5.6. Look for other possible methods of cooperation or projects of interest.

Aim - 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 activities provided. The BOVA webpage is used as a basis for the information flow. However, local institutional methods could be used for other means to market BOVA.

Objectives

- 6.1. Keep the information on the BOVA webpage updated and add links to the BOVA webpage on the webpages of home institutions;
- 6.2. The BOVA Student Council to assist in promoting BOVA among students;
- 6.3. Organize bachelor-level courses on general topics for members of Student Unions or similar;
- 6.4. Produce material for promotion of BOVA;
- 6.5. To use all possible modern internet technologies and social media for information dissemination;
- 6.6. Improve the advertising system on offered BOVA and NOVA courses among BOVA students.

Funding

The BOVA University Network runs its activities based on:

Internal funds: an annual membership fee from each institution agreed every year by the 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 the BOVA Secretariat or by a single member university. These funds are raised for specific activities. BOVA UN will continue seeking such funds.

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

- Annually revise the possibility for the enlargement of the 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 specific organizational structure, as stated in the Statutes of BOVA, for the implementation of the tasks identifies 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 into BOVA activities. In 2010 BOVA UN established a BOVA Students' Council to ensure the students' perspective in BOVA joint actions.

For the strategic period of 2015 – 2020 BOVA has the intention to achieve the following:

- Revise the existing BOVA organizational structure and the tasks of each unit respectively;

Responsibility for implementation of the Strategy

The BOVA Rectors' Board approves the Strategy for a specified period and responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Strategy can be achieved only within the framework of agreed BOVA cooperation. **The BOVA Rectors' Board** is responsible for making clear political decisions and statements, with secured internal finances, in order to meet Strategy implementation needs.

The BOVA Strategy should be integrated into each member institutions' strategic plans, and each member institution should ensure its implementation.

Once yearly the BOVA Secretariat informs the BOVA Rectors' Board about the implementation of the Strategy. After its evaluation the RB can decide on moderating the strategic plan, if that is necessary.

WG of BOVA Strategy development