

# **BSRUN**

## **Anniversary Bulletin**

### **The First Twenty Years**



2020

## Foreword

20 years ago on the initiative of the University of Turku the Baltic Sea Region University Network (known as BSRUN) was founded. The background was the strong interest of the university, city and region in the cooperation in the Baltic Sea region in general and the extensive links of the university with other institutions in the region. The symbol of the Network is the Bengtskär lighthouse which testifies both to the maritime culture of the region and the enlightenment universities bring to their environments.

The starting point was the exchange of information and experiences, joint events and projects focused on the management and administration of universities in order to train the new senior management of the universities and to establish professional links for them with their colleagues in the neighbouring countries without needing to go any further.

The Network's value is in its members – it only may survive, if members are interested in cooperation and exchange with each other. BSRUN member institutions are now located on both sides of the EU-Russia/Belarus border. If you are interested in learning from your neighbours and developing something together across the national borders, our member universities are among the very best you can find.

The Network has organized more than a hundred seminars and conferences with close to 5500 participants. We have found very attractive topics for universities from the region: Campus Development (from development to construction), Educational Reforms (from mergers to university boards), Internationalisation etc. At the same time BSRUN has established strategic partnerships with intergovernmental institutions like CBSS and BSPC to provide expert counselling on regional cooperation and development.

This anniversary issue of the BSRUN Bulletin gives you a short factual history of the organization together with memories and experiences of some key people whose paths crossed with BSRUN during our activities. We do hope you enjoy reading the bulletin as much as we enjoyed our journey from 2000 till the present day. We would like to thank you all for your cooperation and support over the course of these twenty years. BSRUN is inviting you back to Turku again to officially celebrate our journey together in June 2021.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kari Hyppönen'.

**Kari Hyppönen**

*President*

## Background



The City of Turku was founded in 1229 and traded with the members of the Hanseatic League. Later on many of the old Hanseatic cities came to have important universities as has been the case of Turku, too.

The city of Turku was twinned in the Baltic Sea region with many cities where the University of Turku also had its own partners. Turku was twinned with e.g. Leningrad (St. Petersburg) in 1953 and with Gdansk in 1958.

The first University in Finland was founded in Turku in 1640, but it was moved to Helsinki in 1828 and became the current University of Helsinki.

The University of Turku celebrates this year its 100th anniversary. The Swedish language University in Turku, Åbo Akademi, was founded in 1918 and the Turku School of Economics in 1950.

In 1997, on the initiative of the university, the Finnish Ministry of Education gave the University of Turku (UTU) the task of coordinating the links of Finnish universities with the universities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and in the wider Baltic Sea region. The ministry decision gave a good basis for the seed funding of the future BSRUN together with additional contributions by UTU and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

In the 1990's UTU had been actively involved in several EU Tempus projects with International partners on different aspects of University Governance, Management and Administration in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The oldest official links of UTU in the region were with Leningrad (St. Petersburg) State University (1966) in Russia and the University of Tartu (1987) in Estonia. In the 1990's new bilateral links had been established with universities in Riga, Klaipeda, Vilnius, Kaunas, Kaliningrad, Gdansk, Poznań, Rostock and Kiel.

In 1997, UTU established in Estonia the Saaremaa University Centre in Kuressaare for regional development projects together with the University of Tartu, Tallinn Technical University, Tallinn Pedagogical University and Estonian Agricultural University. Several events were organised in late 1990's at the centre which also partner universities from Latvia and Lithuania attended.

The Centre for Extension Studies of UTU had been active in Saaremaa, Läänemaa and Hiiumaa already in the early 1990's and had had an office in Kuressaare since 1993.

In 1998, the Turku University Foundation acquired in Tartu Villa Tammekann, the only building in Estonia designed by the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, which then became the Granö Centre for cooperation between UTU and the University of Tartu.

In addition to bilateral links and to enhance credibility as the future network coordinator UTU had then joined CRE (current EUA), CBUR (Conference of Baltic University Rectors), the Coimbra Group (of old multi-faculty universities) and the International Association of Universities (IAU, affiliated with UNESCO).

From the point of view of the key target group of the future BSRUN memberships in NUAS (Nordic Association of University Administrators) and IMHE (Institutional Management in Higher Education of the OECD) gave important international experiences and examples.

At the level of individual memberships CHER (Consortium of Higher Education Researchers), EAIE (European Association for International Education) and especially EAIR (European Higher Education Society), whose Annual Forum of 1993 was organised at UTU with exceptionally many participants from Central and Eastern Europe, created good opportunities for recruiting speakers for future BSRUN events.

For staff and student exchange UTU had regionally related programmes in Eastern European Studies, Baltic Sea Region Studies and European Studies. The expertise also included a Jean Monnet Centre and a Jean Monnet Chair (Dr. Esko Antola) who had visited extensively future BSRUN member institutions for public events on various aspects of the European Union.

The Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) was founded in 2000, and the year 2020 was marked with the celebration of its 20th anniversary.

#### **I Keijo Virtanen, Rector of the University of Turku 1997–2012:**



*The founding ceremony of the Baltic Sea Region University Network, 28 February 2000, has a special place in my mind. It was a memorable experience to see the esteemed representatives of the member universities in Turku, where they also participated in the annual ceremony of the founding of our University eighty years earlier. Likewise, I will always remember the formal signing of the agreement of the member universities at our medieval castle of Turku. Five years later, in 2005, the Rectors and other representatives were again present at the annual ceremony of the University of Turku, now celebrating at the same*

*time the fifth anniversary of the network. These two occasions are memorable for me also in providing most welcome opportunities to meet so many colleagues and friends from so many Baltic universities on my hometown. Many of these contacts have become long-lasting.*

**Janis Stonis, Deputy Rector for Students and Social Affairs, University of Latvia,  
BSRUN Vice-President 2010-2013 and Vice-Chairman 2002-2010:**



*2000 or as it was then called Y2K. It was a year that many were looking forward to with great excitement. It was also a year that was expected with an anxiety and even the end of many computer systems was “planned”. Very interesting time indeed. It was a time when we were arguing about things like “when second millennium begins - in 2000 or 2001?”. It was 20 years ago. Lot of time? A little? We can each look at it from the perspective of our own experience.*

*For me, this was the year when my experience in university administration at the TOP level began. It is also the year when BSRUN was born.*

*It should be remembered that in 2000, only Finland was a member of BSRUN universities in the European Union. All the other BSRUN university countries began to build their economies, universities began to build their governance structures and international cooperation to the west. Looking back on these years, BSRUN provided an opportunity to quickly establish partnerships with neighboring universities in the region and to quickly exchange experiences in different situations. In the first years of the new century, universities faced many new challenges in governance of universities, such as the development of the faculty governance model that my university became aware of as a result of the BSRUN network, PR and media relations at universities in the east and south of the Baltic sea, financial systems and many other issues. I can say that the first ten years of BSRUN formed a whole new generation of administrators at network universities.*

*It was a very interesting time, which we can remember as a time of accumulating knowledge and experience, a time of forming new human relationships, it is a time that we can remember both with great seriousness and with a smile.*

**I Mait Klaassen, Founder, Rector of the Estonian University of Life Sciences:**

*Cooperation does not come from nowhere, but from the common desire to do something together. Twenty years ago, several universities found that together we are much more capable of doing something for the Baltic Sea higher education and research area. Originally the idea was to deal with the problems of our common, the Baltic Sea, but now the circle of problems, as well as the circle of universities involved, has significantly expanded.*

*BSRUN has developed into a well-known brand from universities, through which partners can find partners with same ideas, join the networks of other universities and expand the competence and quality of education provided through these activities. As one of the founding members, I wish our network happiness and activity in achieving our common purpose!*



**I Stanislav L. Tkachenko, Vice-rector of SPSU (2002-2007), Professor:**



*BSRUN was established in a unique period in history of the Baltic region and at the highest of development of regional states' relationship after the Cold War. At that time, the Baltic Sea region had become the most peaceful and prosperous region in the world as well as zone of peace and cooperation. Time flies and now the region looks rather different – new dividing lines, diplomatic conflicts, sanctions, etc.*

*I do remember very well those wonderful times! Since late 1990s the St.Petersburg State University had been looking for institutionalization of international contacts via integration of its teaching and research*

*activities into a whole-European academic ecosystem.As a Vice-rector of SPSU, responsible for international cooperation, I has been looking for learning experience from other states and its accommodation with post-Soviet Russia's realities.*

*Solution has been found in Finland, in the beautiful city of Turku. The name of the person, who provided highly-professional assistance to SPSU as well as to many other universities in North-Western Russia, Belarus and Baltic states – Kari Hyppönen and his University of Turku.*

*The idea of establishment of a network of leading universities has been implemented with essential assistance of diplomats and governmental officials from our countries. Still, the real drivers of this innovative form of cross-borders and cross-cultures' cooperation have been university administrators, professors, Ph.D. candidates and students.*

*As a result of 20 year-long BSRUN cooperation, we at St. Petersburg State University have modernized our management system, promoted exchange of students and teachers, developed brand-new master program on Baltic Studies. Our cooperation has started from transfer of know-hows on organization of higher education system from Finland into Russia and several other transitional economies. Nowadays it is full-fledged partnership of 26 universities in 7 Baltic States, which comprises different academic disciplines, all levels of higher education (B.A., M.A., Ph.D. and post-docs), researchers and administrators.*

*We do hope that both COVID-19 and current crisis in EU-Russia relations will be finished one day and Russian universities as members of a united BRSUN family will be able to resume our cooperation with foreign partners, as we already did once – 20 years ago.*

**I Jukka Kola, Rector, University of Turku, Finland**

*Acknowledging their role in facilitating international University cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region during the past active 20 years, University of Turku congratulates the Baltic Sea Region University Network BSRUN and all its members on the 20th Anniversary!*

*With Season's Greetings and a Happy New Year 2021!*



## Establishment



*BSRUN signatories and guests in Turku in 2000*

BSRUN was founded on 28 February 2000 on the initiative of the University of Turku as an umbrella organisation to facilitate and enhance co-operation between the 16 signing parties who were:

- ▶ Estonian University of Agriculture
- ▶ Kaunas University of Technology
- ▶ Medical University of Gdansk
- ▶ St. Petersburg State University
- ▶ Tallinn Technical University
- ▶ University of Gdansk
- ▶ University of Tartu
- ▶ Warsaw School of Economics
- ▶ Kaliningrad State University
- ▶ Klaipeda University
- ▶ Riga Technical University
- ▶ Tallinn Pedagogical University
- ▶ Technical University of Gdansk
- ▶ University of Latvia
- ▶ University of Turku
- ▶ Vilnius University

BSRUN is not a legal person, but is based on an agreement between members. This guarantees the flexibility that is needed when e.g. moving the secretariat between countries at relatively short intervals. The Plenary Meeting decides which secretariat acts as the legal representative of BSRUN, if needed.

Since 2014 BSRUN has been a strategic partner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). BSRUN also has an Observer status with the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC).

# Structure and Management

## Plenary Meeting

The Plenary Meeting of the organisation was in the beginning organised every second year starting in 2002. The 2010 Plenary Meeting in Turku decided to move to three year cycles.

The locations of the Plenary Meetings have moved as follows:

2002 Gdansk, 2004 Riga, 2006 Tallinn, 2008 Kaliningrad, 2010 Turku, 2013 Riga, 2016 Warsaw and 2019 St. Petersburg.

Plenary Meetings in Riga in 2004 and In Turku in 2010 decided on the future directions of the organisation based on two reports by external evaluators in 2003 and 2009. Many key principle of current rules and regulations go back to the 2010 agreement between members.



*Plenary meetings in Riga, 2013 and St. Petersburg, 2019*

## Steering Committee

Before the first Plenary Meeting in Gdansk in 2002, BSRUN was managed under the umbrella of the central administration of the University of Turku.



*The SC meetings in St. Peterburg, 2019 and Riga, 2020*

The Steering Committee has since 2002 consisted of member representatives by countries. In the beginning there were two representatives from countries with more than five member institutions.



At the moment there is one member per country with a personal substitute. The Plenary Meeting decides which member institutions the members and their substitutes come from. The heads of these institutions then appoint the members and substitutes.

**Dr. Igor Zhukovskiy, Member of the BSRUN Steering Committee 2011-2013, Head of the Mission to Poland of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation:**



*Dear BSRUN community, Congratulations on this special day and many wishes for more great days ahead. BSRUN's founding vision – as I understand it – was based on the idea that strategic arrangements of governments are not enough to secure the lasting and sincere development of the university cooperation in the Baltic Region. BSRUN promotes dialogue and mutual understanding between university leaders, supports educational and research partnership development in the Baltic Sea. I believe that twenty years on, BSRUN's mandate is as relevant as ever”.*

## President

Since 2010 the Plenary Meeting has appointed a president who chairs the Steering Committee and represents all the members but does not represent a country nor a member institution. In addition, the Steering Committee appointed from amongst its members a vice-president. The 2016 Plenary Meeting in Warsaw introduced two vice-presidents to act as deputies to the president.



***Two faces of the president: on his favourite beach in Nida and at the Plenary Meeting in St. Petersburg in 2019***

## Secretariats

For the first ten years the BSRUN secretariat was located at the University of Turku. When at the 2010 Plenary Meeting an annual membership fee was introduced, BSRUN also moved to a calendar year system from the more vague academic year basis.

The secretariat moved to the University of Latvia at the end of June 2010 and the secretariat term there was extended till the end of 2013. At the 2013 Plenary Meeting in Riga two secretariats for 2014-16 at UWM in Olsztyn (legal representative) and at UNECON in St. Petersburg were introduced. The same pattern has continued ever since: the University of Warsaw (legal representative) and UNECON in 2017-19 and the University of Latvia (legal representative) and UNECON in 2020-22.

# Officers

## President

Kari Hyppönen 2010-22



## Vice-Presidents

Janis Stonis 2010-13

Dmitry Vasilenko 2014-22

Alojzy Nowak 2017-19

Andreas Zaby 2020-22



## Chairman of the Steering Committee

Kari Hyppönen 2002-2010

## Vice-Chairman of the Steering Committee

Janis Stonis 2002-2010



## Heads of Secretariats

Dmitry Vasilenko, UNECON, 2014-22

Jerzy Jaroszewski, UWM in Olsztyn, 2014-16

Alojzy Nowak, University of Warsaw, 2017-19

Gundars Berzins, University of Latvia, 2020-22



## Events

In the 2010 agreement and the following rules and regulations BSRUN has been defined as a network for University Governance, Management and Administration and a platform for new ideas, contacts and projects.

In practice, BSRUN has always been willing to organise joint events on almost any topic the members have been interested in.

The main annual event was first called the Baltic Seminar of University Administrators (BSUA), but since 2013 it was given a new name: Annual BSRUN Forum also to invite a wider audience.

All major BSRUN events have covered the region quite well geographically as can be seen also in the Plenary Meetings above.

Three special events were organised in Turku during the 80th, 85th and 90th anniversary celebrations of the university which the BSRUN member university rectors were invited to attend in 2000, 2005 and 2010. In 2005 the rectors formed an academic procession in their gowns and symbols at the ceremony.



***BSRUN member university rectors in Turku, 2005***

The BSUA rotated as follows: Riga 2000, Kaunas 2001, Tartu 2002, Kaliningrad 2003, Warsaw 2004, Vilnius 2005, St. Petersburg 2006, Turku 2007, Gdansk 2008, Riga 2009, Riga 2011 and Gdansk 2012.



***The Annual Forums in Warsaw, 2015 and Riga, 2017***

The Annual Forum has visited Olsztyn in 2013, St. Petersburg 2014, Warsaw 2015, Warsaw 2016, Riga 2017 and St. Petersburg in 2018 and 2019.

The location of these and other BSRUN events, of course, also depends on the activity of the local hosts. Geography also matters. Therefore, Riga with its very central location in the region figures prominently on the lists of events. The same is true also of the location of the events and the location of the BSRUN secretariats. In 2000-2009 BSRUN organised 53 events with 2504 participants. By 2019 the totals had grown to 107 events and 5464 participants.

**I Aila Grönholm, Secretary of BSRUN in 2000-2010:**



*A most interesting job opportunity was offered to me as secretary of BSRUN when the Network was founded in 2000 in Turku. I worked there for 10 years and could be a part of the network growth from 16 member universities to 39 universities, meeting and cooperating with interesting and qualified people. In the beginning invitations to meetings and events had to be sent fax to reach all members. Internet pages and email lists for the Steering Committee and administrators were formed to help communication. BSUA seminars, Plenary Meetings and other events were organised together with the host universities. That*

*enabled me to see how member universities were operating giving good advice for my own assignments at the University of Turku.*

*Since the meetings and seminars were organised in different universities, it gave me an opportunity to get acquainted with several member universities and colleagues. We compiled statistics on BSRUN organised seminars, participation in events by year and by country. Since coordination was moved from the University of Turku in 2010, I have missed all the wonderful people I met during these years.*

**I Mikhail Pevzner, Vice-rector on International Relations,  
Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University**

*Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University joined the Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) in 2006. We have always considered the Network a platform for an intensive intercultural dialogue among the Baltic Sea Region Universities, allowing to set new contacts, to discuss projects and opportunities for students' and lecturers' academic mobility. This year we are recalling the most remarkable events and projects associated with BSRUN, one of which was the International Conference «Relevant problems of the Higher Education Internalization» held in Novgorod on the threshold of the 10th anniversary of the Association.*

*Back then, Mr. Kari Hyppönen asked a question: «Internationalization and search for the new University identity - crisis or development?». These days, one of the most relevant problems we have to tackle is how to develop internationalization during the crisis, when it is largely affected by such factors as political tension, global economic instability, pandemic. In this challenging period, universities entered the virtual academic workspace, which both saved and fostered international relations.*

*Cooperation with BSRUN encouraged the Novgorod University to found the Centre of collaboration with the Northern Europe and Baltic Sea Region in 2018. Within the Centre we carry out Hanseatic Days, conferences, seminars, summer schools aimed to develop cooperation of the Baltic Sea Region Universities.*

*For the Anniversary, we feel privileged to wish BSRUN a further growth, innovative ideas and projects and activities that would benefit the members of the Association.*







## Strategic Partnership with CBSS



Since 2014 BSRUN has been a strategic partner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The three long-term priorities of CBSS are Regional Identity, Sustainable and Prosperous Region, and Safe and Secure Region. CBSS and BSRUN developed a very open and sustainable relation that helps to enhance university cooperation in the region in general. BSRUN contributed by organizing different thematic events as well as active participation in the EuroFaculty projects, the Summer University project, the Baltic Sea Science Day and Baltic Science Network activities. This is also extremely important in the current political situation when universities, which always work with a time perspective of several years, have to make sure that the discussion channels stay open in both directions. In this both CBSS and BSRUN have an important role to play.

### **I Grzegorz M. Poznański, Director General of the Permanent Secretariat of the CBSS:**



*The Council of the Baltic Sea States is a happy strategic partner of the Baltic Sea Region University Network. BSRUN is working on deepening the cooperation of the academic community of the Baltic Sea region, which is one of the key factors in building innovative knowledge-based societies and economies. BSRUN cooperation contributes to building our Baltic Sea region, which is safer, richer, and more sustainable. Scientific cooperation is crucial to achieving our goals in this regard, especially now in time of pandemic crisis. And BSRUN really helps to build a true Baltic spirit, cooperation, and trust among the inhabitants of our region.*

*BSRUN helps educate Baltic youth so that future generations will be heard well, and the young scientist will contribute to building wealthier and more resilient societies. It is also an important platform for the exchange of information on mobility and collaboration of young researchers. The Council of the Baltic Sea States works tirelessly to achieve these goals and we are pleased that the Baltic Sea Region University Network is one of the important partners in our endeavours. We are happy that for 20 years we have been building together this Balticness that unites us all!*

### **Jan Lundin, Ambassador of Sweden in Belgrade, formerly (2010-16)**

#### **DG of the CBSS Secretariat:**

*When I was 17, I saved money by working weekends at a local newspaper, and bought my first air travel and a Place at the “Summer school of the Russian language” in July in Moscow, one year after the 1980 Olympics. I had then studied Russian for a year at my secondary school, wanting to become a better chess player through access to what was written in a mysterious alphabet in the ‘Shahmatny Byulletin v SSSR’. It was a fantastic experience, not least my excellent teacher, an old but enthusiastic Russian lady with intense eyes, whom I unfortunately lost contact with. I got to see a city quite unlike others I had experienced.*

*The food was mostly bad in those days, at least at the two star Hotel “Sevastopolskaya”, but who cared? My eyes were opened for what Russian culture had to offer beyond chess. And I realized that Russians were no different from other peoples.*



*Only gradually did I realize how much this month in Moscow meant to my personal development. The Russian I learnt was probably a smaller benefit than the realization (being a Swede with a somewhat complex bilateral history to our Eastern neighbour) that ordinary Russians are not dangerous or strange, but cordial and pleasant, and with a strong culture of learning at that. To my own surprise and joy, my language skills later opened the door to the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and culminated in 2010 when being offered the helm of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat. At the CBSS, I was in the field of education acquainted with the Eurofaculty Project, at that point active in the Russian town of Pskov. But there was also the Baltic Sea Region University Network, and its Primus Motor Kari Hyppönen. I came to appreciate BSRUN very much, and was in 2014 pleased to see the Network becoming a Strategic Partner to the CBSS. When I (perhaps subconsciously driven by my 1980 Moscow experience...) suggested the CBSS Summer University concept, Kari and BSRUN were happy to respond, and join the effort. I left the CBSS in 2016 but am very pleased to see that the Summer University concept, and the BSRUN, are alive and well. I still remember how happy I was when informed by Dmitry Vasilenko that St Petersburg State University of Economics stood ready to respond and host the second Summer University in 2016, one year after the first one had taken place at Södertörn University in Stockholm. In addition, the Baltic Science Network, another CBSS initiative, is also doing well. This kind of cooperation is extremely important and brings hope during what is a difficult political period in Europe and the world. Coming to think about it, 1980 was not that politically great either... Thus, happy anniversary, BSRUN, and please keep fighting for regional University cooperation, whatever the political atmosphere!*

## **EuroFaculty Pskov II**

The second three year phase (2012–2015) of the EF-P with revised objectives and even wider university base around the Baltic Sea area was launched on 1 September 2012. The EF-P set ambitious goals for the second phase: launching of an International Master Programme around the Baltic Sea business, launching of an International Management Development Programme with unique content, as well as drawing a regional development plan with emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation.

The project consortium was a strong network of some of the leading universities of the partner countries. The project leader was the University of Turku. Among other partners were BSRUN members: University of Tartu, University of Latvia and the Saint Petersburg State University of Economics. The project aimed at creating a strong network between the partner universities – a network which will stay active also after the project period.

### **I Antti Paasio, Professor Emeritus (Entrepreneurship and Innovation) University of Turku:**



*Some time during the first decade of the 21st century, the Council of Baltic Sea States decided to initiate the Eurofaculty Pskov, as a sequel to an earlier undertaking. The winning bid was provided by a consortium led by The Turku School of Economics, together with an experienced team from Roskilde, Trondheim, Stockholm and St. Petersburg. The Pskov Polytechnic University and The Volnyij Institute were the new partners. This international team was to build academic bachelor and master level degrees plus a host of other new activities for the Pskov Polytechnic University. EF-P was monitored by the Swedish Foreign Ministry in Stockholm. An international academic network investing time and knowledge to*



*benefit one or more universities within the region. Sounds like BSRUN, but this time it was called Eurofaculty Pskov.*

*In 2008 the action started like many similar projects before this. Several task groups started their work, accountabilities were defined. One group for the bachelor level, one for the continuing education, one for quality control plus a few others. The take-off phase proceeded quite slowly, mostly due to the new and untried Bologna principles that seemed to be having different interpretations in European countries. Also, the project management experienced difficulties. When I took the helm in 2010, as the third project leader, the output was critically late and the operational and financial control needed attention. We had to quickly build vastly different cultures, traditions, and local conditions into a common environment. But we did it and trust took care of the rest.*

*Quite honestly, there were a lot of bottlenecks. English was not a strong enough common language and we put a lot of effort into language teaching of faculty and students. Also pedagogical learning took place. Senior and junior teachers of Pskov went over to the partner universities for co-teaching periods. After a few years there was a visible improvement in communication and we learned step by step how to make the necessary pedagogical steps from teaching-only to learning-and-teaching.*



*After three years, we had managed to define the bachelor degree in detail and successfully launch many of its modules. The local environment had also changed quite dramatically as one partner in Pskov had to go out of business and The Pskov Polytechnic was now a much larger Pskov State University with stronger resources to invest in our project, too. New challenges and new opportunities. The CBSS luckily saw in all this more opportunities than threats and granted us finance for another three years. Our ambition grew at the same time and we invited more partners into the consortium. E.g. the universities of Latvia and Tartu and also FINEC from St.Petersburg came along. We also wanted a German and Polish connection and after extensive search, we also had one Polish and one German partner.*

*Now we had a very promising group of universities and three more years to make progress. We decided to aim high and build a very modern master's program around the concept of international business. Our view was very North-European, or Baltic, if you like. The key objective was to start creating joint study modules with students from many partner universities. International student teams that would solve real Baltic Sea Region business problems. Good enough IT networking technology seemed to be available and then we simply launched it. Perhaps the computer classrooms and library the project built in Pskov also helped to bridge the gaps? We also had joint*

*innovation events and one winning team even to MIT Global Launch event to get an even wider perspective. One could see also faculty taking further steps together. This kind of model is perfectly feasible for Baltic Sea Region University co-operation. Our model was light and easy. We did not want a joint or double degree because of time limitations. Instead, we called our model a strategic alliance. And why not think big: If education can do it, why not also research? There is a great need for better understanding the North European business in order to better promote start-ups, fast-growth companies and building a stronger regional market.*

*Suddenly, a university was not only a place and infrastructure, but a network with international faculty and international body of students. We realised that this was not nearly enough but we also learned it was doable and synergy would be a strong strategic asset in the university development. Unfortunately the Executive Business Program for Baltic managers had to be postponed, but perhaps something like that will be established in the coming years.*



*Will the EF-P efforts benefit the quality and quantity of Baltic Sea Region university co-operation also in the future? My personal feeling is that there is a definite value-added and that future actors will find increasing benefits of international thinking and acting. It requires innovative thinking and strong will but the rewards will be great. Open systems perform better in dynamic environments.*

*I was quite near retirement in 2010. The next six years proved to be exciting and good years. My academic understanding of the universities of the region increased hugely. Pskov proved to be a town with a fascinating history, Riga was full of culture, Trondheim had a very pleasing scenery. And so on. When the present pandemic is over, there will be many places to re-visit and friends to spend time with.*

**Marina Makhotaeva, Centre of Science and Academic development,  
Higher School of Economics St. Petersburg:**



*We are happy to greet the Baltic Sea Region University Network on its anniversary! Within the 20 years, the members have seen plenty of implemented projects aimed at development of the Baltic Sea region universities, ample of events and meetings on the relevant topics as well as have set lots of contacts, encouraging to implement new ideas and projects then and now. From 2009, a large international project «Eurofaculty Pskov» was implemented at the Pskov State University. While many members actively participated in the project, the Network*

President Kari Hyppönen took part as a member of the International Expert Group from Finland. A large number of events dedicated to academic programs advancement, quality enhancement, academic mobility development, infrastructural growth etc. were implemented within the project. Such events gave an opportunity to learn more about the international experience, share the ideas and set professional contacts. The results achieved through the project implementation had an incredible impact on the University growth within the transition to the new educational system of the higher education in Russia: the University developed new academic programs, including these of professional re-training and academic mobility for the University employees. Besides, participation in the project stimulated the University internationalization, which led to gaining better positions in the national University Rankings. For instance, formally years, Master Program «Business in the Baltic She Region» developed in collaboration with the network members has been successfully training international business specialists highly demanded both locally and in other regions.

**I Petter Zettinig, adjunct professor, University of Turku:**



*The CBSS Eurofaculty Pskov (2009-2015) is a prime example how cooperative projects generate long-lasting impact through personal and institutional linkages between BSRUN network members and beyond. They create cross-border partnerships that are active and renew themselves through iterative and new initiatives. For instance, a joint course in international business strategy, running annually since 2014, create a learning space and actions between partners. During the past years it has brought students on various levels, from BSc, MSc and executive programs together to enhance participants' competencies in strategy,*

*international business and cross-border project management. The course puts students into multinational teams, which work on proposals for solving partner companies' strategic international business challenges. Starting as a cooperation between the University of Turku, Pskov State University, University of Latvia and the University of Tartu, where students learn to organize, manage and lead multinational virtual teams, this initiative has expanded well beyond the original network and Baltic Sea Region focus to now include institutions as far as Ireland and Mexico, with students currently working together across 12 time zones. The network comes to life when individuals and institutions take initiative, develop such ideas and build on them. Then they inspire new spin offs. For instance, the above mentioned cooperative course has been replicated in a partnership between UNECON in St Petersburg, the University of Turku and Braunschweig Technical University, Germany. Students learn to work together in realistic settings, overcome cultural and actual distances and that shapes their practices and orientations about international business.*

## **Future of EuroFaculty (CBSS Project Support Facility)**

The main objective of the Future of the EuroFaculty project was to develop the concept of the EuroFaculty in order to bring it up to date to correspond to the current needs of the Baltic Sea region in the field of university collaboration. In addition, reviewing the EuroFaculty concept was in line with the CBSS priority areas of "Education & Culture" and "Economic Development" and the Finnish CSO presidency. The project partners from BSRUN were UTU, UNECON and University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn.

## CBSS Summer Universities

Summer universities are key instruments of the CBSS, bringing academic substance to the long-term priorities of the CBSS: regional identity, sustainable and prosperous region, and safe and secure region. Summer universities are also a means to assess the state of affairs in and the future development of the Baltic Sea region. CBSS summer universities facilitate dialogue and cross borders between both countries and academic disciplines. CBSS summer universities started in 2014 with Stockholm's Södertörn University and Berlin's Humboldt University. BSRUN members hosted CBSS Universities in Gdansk, St. Petersburg and Novgorod.

## Baltic Science Network & BSN\_powerhouse (Interreg)

Baltic Science Network (BSN) was an Interreg Baltic Sea Region funded project. Its aim was to provide science and research ministries of the Baltic Sea region states with an overall coordination framework to develop and implement science policy in a macro-regional dimension and to ensure a better representation of macro-regional interests on the EU level. The BSN project also aimed to develop and implement transnational strategies, incentives and programmes to support higher education, research and innovation and to develop R&I excellence. BSN\_powerhouse is an extension project aimed on establishment of young researchers' mobility program BARI. The Baltic Science Network is a flagship project within the priority area education of the EUSBSR.

### **I Tadas Juknevičius, Policy Analyst, The Government Strategic Analysis Center, Lithuania:**



*“Manuscripts don’t burn” neither does the work done by BSRUN over the last 20 years. Long live BSRUN and be a guiding light for universities cooperation in the region.*

## Projects

Network tries to be attentive to members but at the same time be more active in promoting benefits of active membership. One of members' demands is connected to international research and educational projects drafting, application and lobbying. BSRUN proved to be successful in gathering sustainable consortia through the past years.

**Dmitry Vasilenko, Vice-rector for International Relations at UNECON,  
BSRUN Vice-President 2014- currently:**



*UNECON is an active partner in various networks in Russia and abroad. We believe that networking gives a unique atmosphere of sharing knowledge and experience as well as fosters regional development and forms trust in cross-border regions. The network is valuable, if its members are attractive and interesting for your institution. The BSR is an area of strategic interest of UNECON and thus we pay big attention to cooperation with regional universities especially in Finland, Germany and Poland. We joined BSRUN exactly ten years ago when Network moved from Turku to Riga. It was a new interesting challenge*

*not to focus on internationalization agenda but to recruit Real Estate, PR and Marketing, Student Services administrators both from our university and other Russian schools to take part in numerous BSRUN events. Via BSRUN we joined the consortium of one of the most successful Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects – Aurora (on academic mobility) and EuroFaculty Pskov 2 as Russian donor university. We were supporting applications to CBSS Project Support Facility grants with UTU, EMU, UL, BSU and other members. BSRUN made our cooperation with regional universities more sustainable through projects and joint events and we are truly enjoying our membership among active and seeking, focused and motivated universities.*

### Erasmus Mundus Action 2 Projects: Triple I, BMU-MID and Aurora

EMA2 projects aimed to enhance international cooperation in the field of higher education by awarding scholarships for students and university staff in partner universities. Academic opportunities for studies, research and professional development were open to citizens of EU countries and Belarus, Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine to Partner Universities. The Lead partner was the University of Turku.



*EU launched the Erasmus Mundus programme in 2007, and already next year University of Turku launched successfully the first consortium within the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window, which later turned into Erasmus Mundus Action 2. Erasmus Mundus consortiums are built with approx. 10 Universities from EU countries and approx. 10 Universities in target countries. BSRUN was a key partner for UTU to connect with partners and build a strong network.*

*The first of our Erasmus Mundus projects with EU countries and Russia was Triple I. It received funding repeatedly over the next years, resulting in total four Triple I projects. Triple I got an University of Turku coordinated sibling in 2011, when BMU-MID started continuing the previous cooperation of an earlier BMU project. BMU-MID*

had cooperation with EU countries and Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. In 2012, new consortiums named Aurora and MID were built on basis of Triple I and BMU-MID. MID featured a larger group of target countries, including Georgia and Armenia in addition to Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. The last project in the long list was Aurora II for mobility between EU and Russia.

Erasmus Mundus activities were large-scale mobility activities and reached considerable amount of funding. Each project had a budget of approx. 4 M€, and with eight projects total the total budget of the projects was over 30 M€.

Over the years, the projects were able to realise 1772 mobilities. The range of mobility activities in Erasmus Mundus was wide. It ranged from four-month undergraduate student exchanges to three-year grants for doctoral degree, and from two-year grants for master's degree to one-month staff exchanges. Many dreams and experiences were realized through these mobilities and many connections and friendships were formed. The impact of these can carry on for a lifetime.

Even though the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 has ended, the legacy of the projects continues living in the networks. The connections from the projects have formed a basis for many Erasmus+ and research projects.



**Mari Leino**, Research Coordinator  
(EMA2 project coordinator 2013-2017)  
University of Turku

**Irinja Paakkanen**, Head of International Affairs  
(EMA2 project leader 2008-2017)  
University of Turku

## EMA2 Figures & Facts

### Eight projects over the years 2008 – 2017

- ▶ Triple I 2008-2012, 2009-2013, 2010-2014, 2011-2015
- ▶ BMU-MID 2011-2015 and MID 2012-2016
- ▶ Aurora 2012-2016 and Aurora II 2013-2017

### BSRUN members who participated in the projects

- ▶ University of Turku
- ▶ University of Latvia
- ▶ University of Warsaw
- ▶ St. Petersburg State University of Economics
- ▶ Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University
- ▶ St. Petersburg State University
- ▶ Yaroslav-The-Wise Novgorod State University
- ▶ Belarusian State University
- ▶ Belarusian State Pedagogical University named after Maxim Tank
- ▶ Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno

### Mobility numbers 2008 – 2017: 1772

Russia → EU: 1020

Eastern Neighbourhood → EU: 414

EU → Russia: 310

EU → Eastern Neighbourhood: 28

## Fostering Competencies Development In Belarusian Higher Education – FOSTERC (Erasmus +)

The main aim of FOSTERC was to support the modernization of governance, management and functioning of Belarusian Higher Education Institutions. FOSTERC promoted the shift towards input/content to output/outcomes in Belarusian Higher Education Institutions. Training workshops and training visits provided good practices to Belarusian institutions to integrate learning outcomes into full model of education. The Lead partner was Technical University of Valencia (Spain). Project partners were Lithuanian University of Education (Lithuania) and 8 BSRUN members – University of Bialystok (Poland), University of Turku (Finland), Belarusian State University, Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, Belarusian State Pedagogical University, Francisk Skorina Gomel State University, Grodno State Agrarian University, Belarus State Economic University (all – Belarus).

## Integrating Belarusian Business Studies in the BSR Higher Education Area (CBSS PSF)

The main goal was to analyze the current state of the sector and to propose solutions for CBSS and other actors for the further investment in the Belarusian educational participation in the BSR. One of the results of the project was establishment of international Summer school «BEST – business education sprint» for 30 Belarusian, Russian and European teachers. In framework of the BEST school five new executive education programs were developed. The University of Turku, Berlin School of Economics and Law, Belarusian State University and University of Latvia were the project partners under the umbrella of BSRUN.

**Alexander Rytov, Deputy Head of Department of International Cooperation, Belarusian State University:**



*Belarusian State University (BSU) believes that membership in the Baltic Sea Region University Network promotes activation of relationship with the International partners, growth of students' and lecturers' mobility, sharing experience, ideas, academic programs as well as raises competitive capability of universities in the international academic area. In 2011, two years before the Belarusian State University joined the Network, the University held the international seminar «University and Business: ways of collaboration», where the European experience of students' and lecturers' involvement to the innovative and entrepreneurial activities was presented.*

*In 2014, BSU held a meeting with participants of the International seminar «Experience of Eurofaculties for the Future», where such topics as foundation of «Eurofaculties» at Pskov State University, St. Petersburg State University of Economics and Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University and opportunities for a creation of such at BSU under financial support of CBSS were discussed. Another example of successful cooperation between BSU and BSRUN might be expansion of its participation in international programs and projects. A large international project «Promoting the development of competences in Belarusian higher education» (FOSTERC) was initiated in collaboration with the Network members. The project was implemented within EC Erasmus+ between 2016 and 2020 and allowed the University to take over the most relevant experience in application of competence approach in the education process.*

Then, last but not the least, BSU participated in the international project «Integration of Belarusian business education in the Baltic Sea Region» funded by the Foundation of project support of CBSS thanks to active support by Kari Hyppönen, the Network President, University of Turku and partner universities from Germany, Latvia and Russia. The project resulted in development of the «map» of needs and potential of business education in Belarus and implementation of advanced teaching models based on «innovative sprint» methods. It can be argued hard that the project led to the creation of the environment for further application of the most progressive practices and approaches in the sphere of business education, to quality enhancement and competitive capability increase of the programs related to business and entrepreneurship.

**Pasi Malinen, Research Director, Areal Research and Development – ARD,  
University of Turku:**



*The Brahea Centre at the University of Turku is currently developing a university-industry programme with Belarusian universities. It is a follow-up based on previous activities among the BSRUN universities in Latvia, Russia and Belarus. The aim of the joint programme is to develop the Belarusian universities towards European standards in university-industry activities. The Brahea Centre has a long tradition of developing university-industry relations in various countries. In many of the previous programmes BSRUN has been the base for selecting the right partners.*

**Andreas Zaby, President of the HWR Berlin, BSRUN Vice-President:**

*HWR Berlin highly appreciates the mutual benefits of a deepened, cross-national exchange and the fruitful collaboration of higher education institutions in the Baltic Sea region which the BSRUN network facilitates. We have already profited from cooperation in many areas of university governance and management, especially regarding foreign language education and language centre management.*

*For the future, we hope for an expanding cooperation in the area of research. It would certainly be a worthwhile challenge to create consortia including BSRUN member universities for collaborations in EU research projects. Last year, HWR Berlin participated in the BelBusiness project under the CBSS Project Support Facility funding and is now contributing to a joint proposal for an Erasmus+ project in the same area. We are hoping to extend the partnership networks in our specialized research areas, such as supply chain management, entrepreneurship, macroeconomics, sustainability or security management.*





## Logo and slogan



Bengtskär lighthouse in the BSRUN logo is the tallest lighthouse in the Nordic countries built in 1906. In short: a lighthouse is a bright idea. Lighthouses like universities spread enlightenment around them. In this case there is a direct link to the University of Turku.

The University started in 1987 a project for the development of the archipelago near Turku. The project included also special training courses for the enterprises in the island communities. The lighthouse is an important architectural monument and a part of the maritime culture of the region where it is located far out at sea. Since the light was automated the lighthouse staff moved away from the island and the building became empty for some decades. Then, during the Archipelago Development Project the idea to renovate the lighthouse came up. Special construction and renovation courses were organized under the umbrella of the project.

To guarantee the continuation of the work and activities on the island started under the project, the Turku University Foundation, which supports also important cultural projects, purchased the lighthouse in 2000. The activities on the island are taken care of by a local entrepreneur who has rented the facilities.

The lighthouse is a now very popular tourist attraction. In 2016, a slogan was added to the logo: BSRUN for Strategy and Practice.

## Membership

Prospective members are expected to come geographically from the drainage area of the Baltic Sea. Some members have been accepted from outside this area.

When the network was established, membership was open to universities only. The 2016 Plenary Meeting in Warsaw decided to accept also universities of applied sciences or other corresponding higher education institutions. Two institutions in this category were approved at the same meeting. Steering Committee can now also extend an associate membership to national or international higher education organizations not eligible for an ordinary membership.

During the first ten years there was no membership fee and the number of members grew up till 40. The 2010 Plenary Meeting in Turku introduced an annual membership fee and a new agreement was drafted. The new agreement was signed then by 27 members.

At the moment BSRUN has 26 members. Prospective new members are expected to approve the current rules and regulations.

### **Igor Maksimtsev, Rector, UNECON:**



*The Baltic Sea Region is one of the key areas for UNECON Strategy 2030. We strongly believe that Baltic Sea countries form a unique environment for education and research, and, thus, UNECON is very active in all major networking initiatives in the region. For us BSRUN is the most valuable Network as it unites university administrators from rectors to librarians, from accountants to real estate managers, and provides them a platform for discussions and the best practices exchange. I am convinced that our activities in the field of university cooperation gives the BSR a chance for the future, as we work with the*

*rising generations of neighbors. On behalf of UNECON I would like to wish BSRUN more active members and many more successful years!*

### **Mika Hannula, Vice Rector, University of Turku, BSRUN Steering Committee Member**

*Year 2020 has been a very extraordinary year all over the world. It will be remembered as a year when COVID-19 locked down countries and societies. For us at universities, this has meant that meetings, conferences and visits have been cancelled. Campuses might have been empty but teaching, research and cooperation continues actively – online. For BSRUN and the University of Turku, this year will also be remembered as a year of anniversaries: 20 years for BSRUN and 100 years for the University of Turku. We are proud that we are among the founding partners of BSRUN. Over the years, many valuable co-operation development projects and contacts have been established in this unique network.*

*This peculiar and challenging year has reminded us that partners and friends are more valuable than ever. Our common goals of co-operation across the borders and around the Baltic Sea are more relevant than ever. Hence, at the University of Turku, we are very committed to developing collaboration and communications with our neighbours in the years to come. We wish to thank all our BSRUN partners and its management for the past 20 years and are looking forward to the years to come.*





**I Irina Kiturko, Rector, Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno:**



*Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno was one of the first Belarusian universities to join Baltic Sea Region University Network in 2006, has joined the Steering Committee as a member and is still actively involved in all BSRUN initiatives and events. BSRUN is a network that opens new horizons for our University, creates the environment for continuous sharing of information, promotes the development of academic mobility, adoption of best practices of foreign universities, identification of new partners, implementation of joint projects and in general internationalization of higher education.*

**I Marcin Gruchała, Rector, Medical University of Gdansk, Poland**

*Congratulations to all BSRUN Members on 20th Anniversary. Great appreciation to everyone in BSRUN management.*

*Best wishes of continued success at fostering cooperation between the neighbours in the Baltic Sea Region.*



**I Prof. Leonids Ribickis, Rector, Riga Technical University, Latvia**

*Congratulations on BSRUN 20th Anniversary! May many fruitful and active years continue!*

**I dr hab. Andrzej J. Przyborowski, Rector, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland**

*On behalf of the academic community and the authorities of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn I am honoured to express our heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Baltic Sea Region University Network. We wish the BSRUN further development and a successful growth.*





## Happy Birthday!

NovSU heartily congratulates BSRUN on its 20th anniversary. We all appreciate the significant contribution of BSRUN to the productive cooperation of universities of Baltic Sea Region!

**Yaroslav-The-Wise Novgorod State University, Russia**

Happy 20th Anniversary. Congratulations, **Best wishes for years of success and achievements.**  
**Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Russia**

Congratulations, BSRUN! The network has been around for 20 years - we are proud to be a part of it and look forward to the next 20 years!.

**Berlin School of Economics and Law, Germany**

Please accept our heartiest congratulations on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Baltic Sea Region University Network and wishes for further prosperity and success in your fruitful activities! It is a great honor for us to be a BSRUN member and we sincerely hope that our cooperation will become closer and more active every year!

Sincerely,

BSU Team, **Belarusian State University**

**The Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia** cordially congratulates the Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary.

20 years is a relatively short time for growing and thus it is remarkable that the BSRUN has established such a strong reputation on European continent for itself so quickly.

Please accept our best wishes for a memorable year and continued success. We believe that the further Network development will continue bringing innovative vision, strategic thinking and systematic implementation of modern educational technologies.

**Francisk Skorina Gomel State University**

Francisk Skorina Gomel State University congratulates BSRUN on its 20th Anniversary. We wish you new achievements, creative ideas and bold decisions.

**Belarus State Economic University**

Dear partners! Belarus State Economic University wishes you a Happy Birthday! We wish you good luck and prosperity, many years of impeccable activity, effective work and significant merits, more big ideas and projects. Our University is glad to our cooperation and may our partnership be marked by joint success.

You will find more facts, figures and photos etc. in the BSRUN database on [www.bsrn.org](http://www.bsrn.org). Photographs courtesy of their authors, UTU photographs by Esko Keski-Oja, Martti Valtonen and Vesa-Matti Väärä courtesy of UTU Archives.

