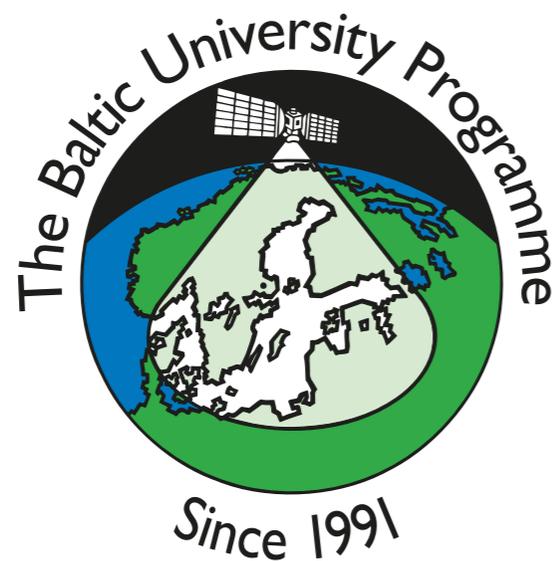


*Celebration of  
three decades*



*The Baltic University Programme*



**One of the world's largest  
university cooperations  
for over 30 years**



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Edited by the BUP Coordinating  
Secretariat

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## Three decades of regional co-operation

Thirty years have passed and The Baltic University Programme is still going strong. Celebrating this 30-year anniversary together with my colleagues is a true joy!

It is an honour to be the Director of this solid, established Programme, of utmost importance and relevance, especially in the current challenging times of war, climate change, pandemics and increased polarization in society. These difficult circumstances require – more than ever – that we continue to communicate, co-operate and contribute to a more sustainable development of our common region.

Since 1991 The Baltic University Programme (BUP) has worked to enhance strong regional academic communities and to foster knowledge on sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. Over time the Programme has developed to become one of the largest university co-operations in the world!

To celebrate all that has been done within the Programme over the last 30 years we have created this book that tells the story of how the BUP began and how it has developed, over the course of three decades. This book also includes stories and memories from colleagues and students from all across the Baltic Sea Region. Unique narratives from unique persons representing this unique Programme. Many thanks for sharing your memories and experiences with regional colleagues.

My BUP story began after my Master's degree in Human Geography at Uppsala University in 1995 when I started to work for the BUP Coordinating Secretariat in the fall of 1996. The work focused on the course *A Sustainable Baltic Region*. My main duties were to develop a detailed teacher's guide related to the course, to write a chapter on Agenda 21 as a contribu-



tion to the course literature and to plan and implement a teacher's conference in Kaunas for 90 teachers. When we launched the course there were 1,700 students from ten countries at 68 universities that attended. After the course other exciting duties were passed to me. I arranged a series of audio conferences to be sent via satellite and planned and oversaw a student conference in the spring of 1997 in Krakow. One year later I was granted funds for research in Russia on implementation of Agenda 21. All these experiences that I gained by working for the BUP have been decisive in my academic work and career. At the teachers' conference in Kaunas I established valuable contact with colleagues, that one year later led me to be a guest researcher at Petrozavodsk State University for four months. It was here that I started working specifically with research in a Baltic Sea Region context. Another colleague that I met via the BUP was Per G Berg, at that time a researcher at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). He became my main supervisor when I was a PhD student, and we were a research team until he passed away in 2021. We had a fruitful and creative co-operation in many research projects, some together with colleagues in Poland, Latvia, Russia, Germany and Denmark.

My BUP story continues when I met the BUP Project Coordinator Maria Hejna outside the Red Cross second hand store in Uppsala in 2015. We had not met for years! Maria asked me if I would perhaps consider being a member of the BUP board. After a couple of meetings with the board, I was asked to conduct a survey on the development of the BUP. This was the start for me, shifting from working as a researcher to a couple of years later working full time at Uppsala University as an Associate Professor and senior lecturer, working half-time as the Director of the BUP. I am happy to be a part of our common BUP adventure, as long as you are all also a part of it.

Sincerely yours,  
Madeleine Granvik,  
Associate Professor, Director of The Baltic University Programme

# 1991 - 2001: Dramatic years of political change

The Baltic University Programme originates from the years of dramatic political change at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. Until then, the East-West divide had been very solid, a real iron curtain, which offered few opportunities for academic co-operation.

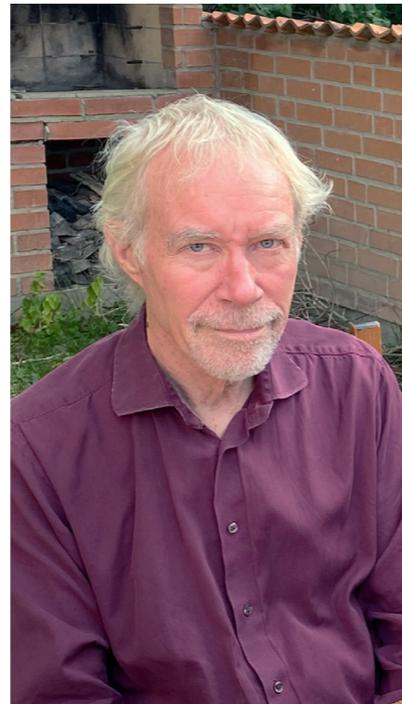
## Dramatic years of system change

Uppsala University had, however, exceptional and long-term exchange programmes with Tartu University in Estonia, Vilnius University in Lithuania and Charles University in Prague. They were operational during the Cold War, and the Academies of Sciences also managed a few contacts. But in general, we lived in a divided world which the students of today have never experienced and probably have difficulties imagining.

The changes started with glasnost and perestroika in the late 1980s. 1989 became the key year. In the summer of 1989 Solidarno was confronting the communist regime in Poland in the so-called Round Table discussions and the first partly free elections were held. In November 1989 the Berlin wall came down after an autumn of demonstrations and marches. In December the velvet revolution in Prague ended the communist regime, followed by the election of Václav Havel as President of Czechoslovakia.

East-West inter-university contacts slowly developed. Uppsala University Rector Martin Holmdahl was a leading person in CRE, the European Rectors Conference. As such, he was the first who was able to invite universities from all Europe, to the CRE conference in Uppsala in June 1989. Soon after, the CRE convened in Warszawa to establish the Copernicus Programme, an academic co-operation with a focus on environmental issues.

The interest for contacts in the Baltic Sea Region mounted. In April 1989



## About the author

Professor Lars Rydén is the creator of the BUP and he was the BUP director from 1991-2007 as well as 2015-2016. He has his background in Biochemistry, but have been active within the field of sustainability science since the early 1990s. He is the editor and author of many books, including *Environmental Science*, *Environmental Management I-X Sustainable Urban Development*, *Rural Development and Land use*, and others.

my proposal to develop a university co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region based on satellite TV was supported by Uppsala University. In early 1990 several university rectors met to establish the Conference of Baltic University Rectors. Professor Lucia Baskauskas organised the Baltic Family Conference. Thus, in October 1990 a group of Swedish participants came to



Some participants from the Baltic Family Conference in Lithuania in October 1990. On her way to Klaipeda, called Memel until the Soviet occupation in 1940, Professor Lucia Baskauskas, first to the left, fled Memel as a refugee and now lives in Los Angeles. Lars is in the middle, holding a cup of coffee. Geographer Professor Thomas Lundén, who took the photo, enjoyed coming to areas he never thought would be possible to visit.

Photo: Thomas Lundén

Vilnius airport in a leased military DC3 airplane welcomed by guards with machine guns. It was still the Soviet Union!

In the meantime, the structure of what later became The Baltic University Programme evolved. The first conference was devoted to developing a satellite TV based university network. It was convened in February 1991 by Uppsala University, and hosted by the Swedish Telecommunications School in Kalmar. Invitations to this meeting had been difficult, where to send invitation letters and to whom? The knowledge of universities in communist Central and Eastern Europe was minimal. We expected 20 universities, but 33 came. The conference was staged just weeks after the attack by the Soviet military in Vilnius in January where 13 young protesters were killed and all TV towers in the Baltic States occupied by Soviet soldiers. The Kalmar Meeting sent a letter to Gorbachev asking for respect for the free flow of information and human rights.



The second satellite TV broadcast was staged in October 1994. Lars was the moderator and in the audience were students and scholars.

Photo: Print screen from the BUP Youtube-channel

#### The first satellite TV course on environment

The Kalmar conference unanimously decided on developing a Baltic Sea Region university network to produce a satellite TV course. It was to focus on the environment and be called *The Baltic Sea Environment*. The title had intentionally a double meaning, both alluding to environmental science and the geographical area. All participants were encouraged to make short video documentaries on environmental issues from their countries.

Two critical issues had to be solved in the coming months. First financing. The Swedish Authority for supporting co-operation with Central and Eastern Europe, called BITS, now with a focus on the Baltic Sea Region, was providing the basic funding. Additional support was received from a university consortium consisting of Uppsala University, University of Copenhagen, Åbo Akademi University and several other Finnish universities as well as the Swedish Telecommunications Company, Teracom. Secondly, the satellite TV part was dependent on us finding competent and willing (not to say enthusiastic) colleagues in the sector. The good news was that the Nordic TeleX satellite became available and had coverage ideal for the Baltic Sea Region. Teracom's Roine Modig organised everything to run the satellite TV. A small secretariat for the BUP was created at Uppsala University to coordinate all this.

In the spring and summer of 1991, the number of universities which wanted to take part continued to increase. In the month of May, it had reached 70. Teracom offered the participating universities satellite receivers and satellite discs for a reduced price. Some were shipped and I personally brought many to the universities. On the brink of boarding the ferry to Tallinn 21 August 1991, the trip was interrupted as news on the putsch in Moscow came. Streets were occupied by tanks. The failure of the putsch was in practice the beginning of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of the three Baltic States were recognized a few days later.

The first BUP satellite TV broadcast was staged in October 1991. It was two hours filled with documentaries from many of the countries in the region and with several of the researchers present in the broadcast. Up to May 1992, ten such broadcasts were performed including two so-called space bridges, discussions between three universities in the network, each with many students taking part. For each broadcast, a small book on the topic was produced and distributed. That constituted the course literature. A total of 3 600 students in nine countries took part in this very first course.

All broadcasts were done from different departments at Uppsala, Stockholm and Åbo Akademi universities which had contributed by writing



BUP meeting in St. Petersburg in January 1993, during which the new course Peoples of the Baltic was planned. Leonid Tichomirov, 5th from right, sitting down, entertained us with songs. The conference dinner, took place in the former KGB (Secret service) restaurant.

Photo: BUP archives



A picture from the BUP national centre in Belarus, then at the National Technical University in Minsk. Students working with the course materials of the course *A Sustainable Baltic Region*, in 1999. The green books for this course are filling the shelves. Belarusian BUP Director Siarhei Doroshka, was able to recruit some 35 universities in seven Belarusian cities into the Programme.

Photo: Lars Rydén

guidebooks that were delivered to the participating universities. Student music bands entertained in the broadcast breaks and researchers from the participating countries formed panels for each topic. A 3D model of the Baltic Sea itself was made by geographer Ulf Erlingsson to physically demonstrate how the water exchange between the Atlantic and the Baltic Sea occurred.

#### The continuation – our common regional history

During this first year of The Baltic University Programme, the first fully free election in Poland was held in October 1991. The Soviet Union was dissolved in December 1991. A second and much stronger Convention for the protection of the Baltic Sea was adopted in the spring of 1992. The number of BUP participating universities had increased to 84 and universities in Belarus and Ukraine had been invited to take part.

After the first pioneering year the enthusiasm for going on just increased. The universities continued to offer the course *The Baltic Sea Environment* for new student groups using the material available. Two more space bridges were broadcast to let new student groups be part of the discussions.

In the fall of 1992 plans were made for a second course. This time on the region itself, its peoples including the many minorities, its history, languages

and religions. It was much more of a challenge since we started to run into sensitive areas. How to deal with Nazism and Stalinism? Some argued that this should not be done. My thinking was that we need to talk about this, especially young people need to talk about this. And who should stage this if not universities?

In the spring of 1993 documentaries and books were produced for the new course *Peoples of the Baltic*, which was broadcast during 1993-94. This time the broadcasts were made not only from Sweden and Uppsala but from all countries around the Baltic Sea and cities such as Visby, Åbo/Turku, St Petersburg, Gdansk and Berlin. And there were space bridges. A special effort was made to analyse security and peace building in the region and the concept of security community was introduced.

#### Focus on sustainable development

In the aftermath of the UN 1992 Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio, the concept of sustainable development had become more and more in focus. The Baltic University Programme introduced the topic for its students already in the spring of 1992 in the last broadcast of the *Baltic Sea Environment* course. Now it was time to let the topic of sustainable development get its own course. This time the books became bigger than before and the TV material not any longer broadcasts but distributed as videotapes. The course *A Sustainable Baltic Region* was delivered in the spring of 1997. The interest was again very great and a total of 4000 students followed. This continued the following years and at least some 50 000 students have learned about the basics of sustainable development using this material, which was translated into Polish, Latvian and Russian.

The first decade of The Baltic University Programme ended with efforts to create education for master students. In 1998 the master course *Sustainable Water Management* was produced. By this time, the internet had become a working possibility and Satellite TV had come to an end. Discussions between student groups was made using this new channel for interaction. This course was finally made as a distance course with all material downloadable from the internet.



Lars together with colleagues at a Centre Directors meeting in Estonia in the late 1990s.

Photo: BUP archive

#### The BUP as more than education

At this stage, The Baltic University Programme started co-operation with municipalities in the region and began in several projects with a practical approach to sustainable urban development. Several laboratories for Geographical Information Systems, GIS, were established and research activities started. Participating universities in the entire Baltic Sea Region, now including 14 countries, took their own initiatives and responsibilities for developing The Baltic University Programme, which had been established as a prime example of regional co-operation.

#### The basic idea – regional university networking - spreading around the world

The Baltic University Programme as a regional university co-operation became a success, and it is one of the largest networks of its kind. The inspiration to create a regional network grew out of a university network initiated by two legendary personalities, President Jean Mayer of Tufts University in Boston, USA and president Matsumaye of Tokay University in Tokyo, Japan. Both played key roles in the final year of WWII and were concerned about the increasing international tensions in the 1980s and wanted universities to contribute to disarmament and conflict resolution. I took part in establishing this network and made Uppsala one of its nodes, the other two being Boston and Tokyo. Satellite TV and satellite bridges were tried out in

this network, an important experience when starting The Baltic University Programme.

Several others have explored and developed university networking during the years using The Baltic University Programme as a model and supporter. Already in the early 1990s nine countries around the Adriatic and Aegean Seas started Uniadrion, a network with some 40 universities coordinated in Bologna in Italy. Similarly, a number of universities around the Black Sea, Black Sea Universities Network coordinated in Rumania organised summer seminars on all kinds of topics, often on an advanced level, on the Black Sea coast. With Swedish support, the BUP contributed to a university co-operation around Lake Victoria in East Africa. The university in Montevideo, Uruguay, in the Rio de la Plata region in South America organised a conference together with BUP. Much later we had similar deals with the Great Lakes district in North America, with a number of universities in East Asia, coordinated in Yokohama in Japan and most recently in Central Asia coordinated in Samarkand in Uzbekistan. Several of these are still active but all much smaller than The Baltic University Programme.



Lars Rydén och Maria Hejna (former Winkler) from the Coordinating Secretariat on board STS Pogoria together with students.

Photo: BUP archive

# 2001 - 2011: The new Millennium

The first decade was dedicated to the establishment of the university contacts over the whole region and to the common effort to produce new study materials for the students. Researchers and teachers were invited to produce study materials and videos to the new learning materials. Examples were then gathered from all parts of the Baltic Sea drainage area. The Baltic University Programme (BUP) was outstanding in its regional focus, a perspective that had been missing in previous learning materials.

## New and updated course material

A decade since its foundation, BUP courses needed to be thoroughly updated. This also resulted in the issue of the book *Environmental Science: Understanding, Protecting and Managing the Environment in the Baltic Sea Region* (2003), co-authored by 80 scholars. The courses were offered locally by the universities in the network. The BUP-course packages were used in different ways, ranging from a series of lectures to compulsory courses at the university. A diploma was issued from the Coordinating Secretariat in Uppsala, when the course had followed the recommended ECTS document. Each year about 9500 students were reported to participate in the courses.

The BUP Coordinating Secretariat coordinated several applied projects together with cities, authorities and organisations. Often these projects also led to the production of new course materials. One such project is the BUUF - Baltic University Urban Forum (1999 – 2002), in which 20 cities and 15 universities in nine countries produced in total 35 case studies on urban planning democracy and environmental management. Another project in this area was SUPERBS – Sustainable Urban Patterns around the Baltic Sea (2003-2007), in this project cities and universities in seven Baltic Sea Region countries focused on urban planning, and produced study ma-



About the author

PhD Paula Lindroos was involved in BUP activities from the start in 1991 until her retirement in 2019. She worked at the BUP Secretariat at Uppsala University as vice-director (1999-2002), and as director (2011-14). She was member of the BUP International Board from 2004 to 2011. In 2016 the Finnish national BUP-centre, where Paula worked, became a BUP Associated Secretariat at Åbo Akademi University. Paula Lindroos field of expertise is within policy and strategies for Education for Sustainable Development.



The BUUF project group in Vilnius at a visit in 2001, under guidance of head planner Saulius Lukosius.

Photo: BUP archives

terials for the course *Community Development* for master level students. BUP also coordinated a project with 34 partners, representing universities in the Great Lakes regions, the Envirovet Baltic Network, as well as ministries, international and intergovernmental organisations and authorities, in the EHSA - Ecosystem Health and Sustainable Agriculture (2006-2009). Three books were produced for master level students on rural development, sustainable agriculture and ecology and animal health.

## Sustainable development and higher education

In 2002, the UN conference on Environment and Development, the Rio+10, was organised in Johannesburg. The concept of sustainable development broadened, as the role of the social and the North-South aspects were emphasized. Action plans and follow up was often organised (meta-) regionally. A regional university network like the BUP was well positioned to take part in this work.

As a regional expression of the global Agenda 21, the Prime Ministers of the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea initiated the Baltic 21 in 1996. The BUP became a member of this network in late 1990's, and later also leader of a Lighthouse project (EHSA). The BUP also participated in the project EcoRegion (2007-2011), which developed and tested practical solutions

for sustainability in the region and aimed at turning the Baltic Sea Region into the world's first EcoRegion, where economic growth goes hand in hand with environmental integrity and social justice. Later, the BUP became a strategic partner for higher education to the Council of Baltic Sea States. The BUP also participated in the shaping of the first EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (approved in 2009), and became lead partner and a flagship together with Lithuania.



University teachers taking part in a sustainability workshop in 2009.

Photo: BUP archives

The role of education was underlined in many different policy discussions, from the UN Millennium Development Goals (2002-2015) with focus on general level of education, to the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). During the Decade countries worked with the strategies and action plans, and in the second part of the Decade, with implementation and capacity development.

The understanding of the wide and complex concept of sustainable development was in focus in many of the BUP meetings, conferences and discussions, and often linked to the role of education, contents and methods. It was noted that sustainable development is an evolving concept which changes over time with a different understanding and emphasis in different parts of the globe. Differences were also visible among the universities and

countries in the Baltic Sea Region, where focus typically could range from environmental security to demography and economy.

Still, there was an observable gap between the universities' activities and where they should be in order to contribute to achieving a more sustainable society that they were so well positioned to do. The problems identified were several, such as an already crowded curriculum, too demanding topic, irrelevance of the topic, limited staff competences and limited institutional commitment. The big question was how universities could change their organisation, research and education in a way which was organisationally feasible, academically acceptable and educationally sound?

#### Consolidation of the network

The Baltic University Programme further expanded, and in this period the number of participating universities exceeded 200. The BUP became connected through nodes, 14 BUP National Centres, one in each participating country. They began to play an important role for the network, participating in discussions on the annual program, and information sharing. The centres in Poland, Germany and Finland developed specialised profiles, as organisers of conferences, summer courses and teachers' competence development.



Paula together with colleagues at the BUP Coordinating Secretariat, then located in offices on Öfre Slottsgatan in Uppsala. The Coordinating Secretariat was the main organiser of the first BUP Rectors' Conference.

Photo: BUP archives



Group of rectors standing outside Uppsala University main building during the the Rectors' Conference 2009.

Photo: BUP archives

Regarding sustainable development and education for sustainable development, there was a demand from academics to share ideas, resources, networks, and opportunities. As a consequence, internationalisation became an important asset for university leaders to further support and consolidate the network.

The first BUP Rectors' Conference was organized in Uppsala in 2006, at the same time filling a gap left after the meetings of Conference of Baltic University Rectors. In connection with the BUP Rectors' Conference, a formal foundation for the co-operation was established on the basis of bilateral inter-university contracts between Uppsala University, as the coordinator and initiator of the BUP, and the participating university. It was also decided that the BUP Rectors' Conference was to be organised every three years. At the Rectors' Conference in 2009 a Declaration of Cooperation within the BUP Network on Academic and Research Collaboration was signed, giving the participating universities a common platform for continuing co-operation. At the 2011 conference the rectors decided to introduce a voluntary contribution to support the activities of the BUP. Until then the activities had been financed mainly by Uppsala University and Swedish project funds, added with EU project funding. Regarding project funding the situation changed dramatically as several BUP member countries be-

came EU members. Notable were also different other ways of contributions, such as offering a place for meetings, lodging for participants of courses and conferences.

The first BUP General Assembly was held at the 2014 BUP Rectors' Conference. The main aim of the general assembly is to further elaborate the long-term goals and strategies for the network co-operation.

#### Students enter the stage

In addition to the courses given at the participating universities the BUP organised two international conferences for students each year. About 200 students participated in these international activities each year. The topics were sustainability-related and followed the political currents. Students learned how to cooperate in international teams, but also to shape their own international contacts and networks. The spring conference included the Students' Parliament, where students gave their opinions and recommendations on BUP's activities, and they also elected one member to represent the students on the BUP international board.

From the late 1990's onwards the BUP organised the SAIL (Sustainability Applied in International Learning) summer course. On a tall sailing ship, more than 30 students from the whole region take an academic course on sustainable development (morning and afternoon sessions and project work, reports), while at the same time working in international teams as crew on the ship with navigation, sails and galley, day and night.

The BUP students have aired their views on sustainability at presentations during the BUP Rectors' Conferences. They have also pushed the borders with politicians and decision makers at the Annual Forums of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. At the 4th Annual Forum 2013 in Vilnius, BUP students prepared the Vilnius Declaration which was handed over to Commissioner on Regional Policy, Mr. Johannes Hahn. In Turku, at the 5th Annual Forum, Marek Szponik, BUP Student Representative, presented the students' view of the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region at one of the plenaries. The main message and concern conveyed



Students onboard the Tall Ship Pogoria, during the course BUP SAIL.

Photo: BUP archives

was to broaden the focus from mainly economic development and growth to focus more on the social and environmental aspects.

#### Teachers' competence development

Teachers and researchers were traditionally closely involved in the planning processes and at the launching of new course packages. And during some years there were mentors for each course theme offering support for teachers. They produced questions for exams and were available for teachers to discuss issues related to the courses. Occasionally they visited universities for guest lectures. Course mentors and their assistants also evaluated and updated courses and supported networking among teachers and course groups.

The concept of sustainability and how it should be introduced at university level education became even more apparent. As part of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, quality guidelines were produced by UNESCO. They included the use of interdisciplinary and holistic approaches, the use of several teaching and learning methods and the integration of local, regional and global aspects in education, and participatory decision-making where students participate in decisions regarding their learning.

Every year teachers were offered conferences on sustainable development and education for sustainable development-related topics, many of which were organised by the Finnish BUP Centre. From 2013 teachers were invited to a summer course, similar to the students SAIL. Guides for teachers were published on the learner centred approach and methods for teaching and learning complex issues, such as the problem-centred approach. It was obvious that traditional teaching methods could not be fully used as the content had to be reflected also through the learning methods in a course. At some universities restructuring of education started at faculty level.

At the BUP Rectors' Conference in 2014 Eva Åkesson, Vice Chancellor of Uppsala University, introduced the paradox of the mobile researcher and the immobile teacher, describing the two different roles of the academic

teachers. Here, she added, The Baltic University Programme has an outstanding role to play, through the support to meet the challenges of new technologies as well as the complex concept of sustainable development.

#### Challenges and drivers for sustainability

After the first decade The Baltic University Programme further established the position as producer of modern courses and learning environments. Furthermore, the network offered new opportunities for contacts, competence development and internationalisation for students and teachers. These activities were also mirrored in BUP's role in international co-operation and capacity development in higher education and as a strategic partner in policy development.



Paula together with some of the BUP course mentors and their assistants.

Photo: BUP archives

# 2011 - 2021: Generational shift – The BUP 2.0

Sooner or later, it happens in all organisations, and The Baltic University Programme (BUP) is no exception: the time for a critical mass of colleagues engaged in the Programme to begin their retirement years. For the BUP, this generational shift started around 2015 and led to several changes regarding organisation and management. New academic initiatives took place. During this transitional period, our priority was first to develop the co-operation within the BUP, to focus on the participating universities, and to have functional National Centres, Secretariats, and to employ new staff. To tweak the old and adopt new routines and policies.

## Heading into a new period

The BUP International Board decided at the end of 2015 to conduct a survey to find out what opinions and ideas colleagues in the BUP had for the future of the Programme. The ambition was to have an open, transparent, and inclusive working process. Thanks to both the survey, and other meetings and conferences, we received valuable input that informed our future strategy. During 2016 the Programme celebrated 25 years of co-operation, and left its status as a project to become a permanent institution. Bilateral contracts between the BUP and universities were signed at the level of Rectors, and the participating institutions started to contribute with an annual fee. Around 60 universities joined that year.

At this time, the BUP presidency was introduced as a new organisational feature. Holding a BUP presidency, is done by every BUP National Centre during a six months period. The National Centres put their own signature on BUP events, enriching the network with new ideas and practices, while also gaining more visibility for themselves. The BUP National Centres also went through a process of renewal and formalisation, and the Programme had the pleasure of welcoming six new Centre Directors. The role and re-



About the author

Associate Professor, PhD, Madeleine Granvik has been active in the BUP since her days as a student. She took on the role as director while she was Associate Professor at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, focusing on planning for sustainable development of urban-rural interactions, with focus on Food Planning. Madeleine combines the BUP directorship with being an Associate Professor at Uppsala University, Dep. of Earth Sciences, Natural Resources and Sustainable Development, currently leading the research project on Resilient Food Systems in Sweden.

sponsibilities of BUP National Centres were strengthened and evolved.

In this time period, there were also discussions concerning the work of the BUP in relation to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals. It was decided that the Programme should give the goals even more attention and to state clearly that we promote and encourage inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary co-operation's where different academic disciplines and perspectives on sustainable development meet. The BUP is strongly convinced that universities play a central role in the development of societies through education of the young generation and by conducting relevant research contributing to sustainability. In connection to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the BUP also defined and adopted ten focus areas, the ten BUP themes.

## Focus on researchers

University teachers, students and researchers have been the primary target groups since the start of the BUP. Most attention during our first 15 years was, however, devoted to developing courses and course material. In the recent years, researchers have been given more attention and various forms of support. In spring 2018, the BUP Research and Publication Office (BUPRaP) was established at the Associated Secretariat at Hamburg University of Applied Science. It gathers and makes available information on open calls for funding programmes, both from the European Union (e.g., Horizon 2020, ERASMUS+, Europe-AID, INTERREG, etc.) and from other grant-awarding bodies. The Office also coordinates publications related to education for sustainable development, environment, sustainable development, and climate change in scientific journals.

Another initiative is the BUP Research Notes Letter, first published for the BUP Rectors' Conference in 2018. The Research Notes Letter features contributions from researchers who are based at participating universities across the Programme. Publishing helps the authors achieve a greater impact with their research findings. It also represents a space where researchers from the region inform and learn from one another, as well as learn about one another.



The ten BUP themes:

- Climate Change
- Energy Systems
- Sustainable Societies
- Sustainable Water Resources
- Urban-Rural development
- Sustainable Mobility
- Circular Economy
- Sustainable Tourism
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
- Sustainable Food Systems



Group photo of the participants at the Centre Directors' meeting in Gdansk, Poland, in 2019.

Photo: Pontus Ambros

Following my vision for the development of the BUP, the first BUP Symposium was organised during 24-25 August 2020. The restrictions linked to Covid-19 put an end to the plans to meet in Visby, and the event was moved online. The Symposium attracted over 200 colleagues to contribute with their research to one of the ten BUP themes, and stressed both the challenges we face and how efforts within different research fields can contribute to the implementation of sustainability in the Baltic Sea Region. As an outcome of the BUP Symposium 2020, there were about 50 scientific papers published in special issues in scientific journals, initiatives taken by me and colleagues acting as guest editors. Since there was a significant interest regarding the Symposium and the special issues, the International Board and the Coordinating Secretariat decided to continue to elaborate this type of academic support and hold the Symposium on an annual basis and continue to cooperate with scientific journals to host special issues.

#### New ways of supporting young scientists

Since 2012, the BUP has offered a PhD Students Training once a year, which has been organised by the Associated Secretariat in Łódź and taken place in Rogów, Poland. It is an opportunity for PhD students from all disciplines to meet and discuss sustainable development in an interdisciplinary and regional context. The training includes lectures and workshops, and a

chance for students to present their PhD work and consult their PhD projects with senior researchers acting as mentors.

Related to this training and in the planning for the BUP Master Thesis Training (planned for spring 2022) a Supervisor Collegium was established in 2021. Currently there are about 60 colleagues that have signed up to be a part of the Supervisor Collegium. This makes it possible to also allow for mentorship and supervision to take place during extended time periods and be more formalised. It is an opportunity for PhD students to get a co-supervisor from another university in the Baltic Sea Region and, at the same time, an opportunity for researchers to take on the co-supervisor role. Seniors in this collegium also make up a possible pool of opponents and members of examination committees for PhD students' defence.

To support talented young scholars, the BUP International Board decided in 2013 to introduce a PhD Award. The idea is to promote novelty research with an interdisciplinary approach, being relevant in a sustainable development perspective in a Baltic Sea Region context. It would find its first laureates in 2014. Since then, the distinction has been given every year to young researchers who successfully competed with their finished PhD projects.

As internationalisation in practice is one of the main long-term goals of the Programme, young scholars, PhD candidates and postdoctoral fellows have since 2017 been able to apply and compete for Mobility Research Grants. The grant enables the winner to be a guest researcher for a certain time period at a university in the Baltic Sea Region; the Mobility Grant gives the winners a chance to broaden, or establish, their own research network.

#### Twice as many events for students

The Programme has for many years been hosting a set of regularly organised student activities, such as student conferences, SAIL for students, and summer courses. The number of student activities has in general increased since 2016 and doubled in 2019. To name one of them, BUP students got a chance to embark, for the first time, on a Sea Yawl Voyage in 2019.



One of our PhD Award winners, Matilda Marshall presenting her research at the 2018 BUP PhD Student Conference Rogow, Poland.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski

This led them to Polessk, Russia, from which they sailed in the Curonian lagoon. Like SAIL, the idea is to combine theoretical knowledge with practical hands-on skills, as well as to improve skills in co-operation and boost students' self-confidence while deepening their knowledge of sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.

Students have also become gradually more involved in the organisation of the Programme itself. Since 2019, the BUP Students' Parliament has convened on a regular basis and clear statutes were developed for its organisation. There is also a project aimed at increasing student involvement that we launched in early 2021, the BUP Student Ambassadors Programme. The ambition is to have Student Ambassadors at each participating university. The scope of the proposed activities for Student Ambassadors includes promoting the BUP at their home university, assisting the BUP National Centre in the given country, assist in a small (or a bigger) data collection/research project, and more. The aim is to create a network consisting of active and enthusiastic students, who will support the Programme and "recruit" new students for courses, conferences, and other events.

#### Teachers in the Programme

Different forms of training for teachers have been organised on a regular basis since the Programme started. Lately, there are two external granted projects, EduBalt and EduBUP, that have been running in the area of Education for Sustainable Development. They were both financed by the Swedish Institute and were realised by the total of around 100 colleagues from nine countries. At the same time, the BUP Associated Secretariat in Finland have been running the course *Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education* for teachers, which takes place on an annual basis. The focus of both the course and the projects has been the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in learning methods in higher education as well as promoting inter-disciplinarity to help teachers develop, experiment with, and practise teaching methods for Education for Sustainable Development. The participants learned how to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into their own teaching, courses, and study programmes. These activities are part of the BUP lifelong learning education.



Participants working with the sails at the SAIL for Teachers in 2017.

Photo: Christian Andersson

Apart from these activities, the BUP has organised SAIL for Teachers. Like students, teachers have had an opportunity to cooperate, network, gain new skills, and expand their knowledge out on the Baltic Sea on a tall ship. Attention has also been paid to teaching materials and courses as the core support for the teachers' work. After looking at how the current BUP course materials are being used and investigating the general interest in and the need for new course materials, it was concluded that new materials are needed in the form of modules, available online, or, alternatively, as massive open online courses (MOOCs). The development of modules has been initiated by the Climate Change Curriculum project coordinated by the BUP Coordinating Secretariat as well as the German group of colleagues. Thus, several course modules are being developed. The work on modules and massive open online courses will continue during the next strategic period.

#### Education, digitalisation and new courses and modules

In general, the BUP strives to offer new courses and modules as well as new forms of teaching. The time has come to digitalise the BUP education. We have been especially reminded of the importance of making materials available in digital form by the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During 2020 a decision was made to start developing a BUP Online Course Platform.

Focus is on developing online courses and modules connected to the ten BUP themes. They will be offered as massive open online courses. This means that they are accessed independent of time and place, as full distance courses. Students and teachers are able to take the course whenever, as a self-paced learning course. So far there are about seven courses under development, which will be a part of the BUP Online Course Platform. In developing these BUP courses, colleagues work according to the BUP working model, which means to work in interdisciplinary and intercultural teams of co-operation. Colleagues from different participating universities, representing different disciplines and academic cultures, contribute with their knowledge and experiences in developing common BUP courses and course materials. This way of working offers opportunities to learn from each other and different perspectives as well as different academic cultures.



Participants at the BUP student conference in 2018, held in Großschönau in Germany.

Photo: Sylwester Nagorka

There are further opportunities with the material developed for each massive open online course. For example, users are able to develop more advanced courses, and to give the student credits by adding, for instance, material, assignments and seminars. These initiatives must then be taken from each BUP participating university. In this case we will also be able to promote virtual exchange co-operations between BUP universities when running credit bearing courses.

In 2021 four joined projects started that relates to the work with the Platform. The E-Tutor project, brings students in and offers them both an opportunity to acquire a new skill set, as well as generate extra income by working for the BUP assisting in the digitalisation of the new modules. The project the Baltic Sea Region Climate Change Curriculum has developed 15 modules for a course on climate change in relevance to the Baltic Sea Region. From this material the 10-credit distance course *Climate Change in The Baltic Sea Region - An Inter disciplinary approach*, has been developed as well during 2021. It is hosted by Uppsala University, in co-operation with fourteen other participating universities. Another outcome is the development of a massive open online course focused on the same topics. Other work in progress is the project Digital at home that will result in course modules in the area of social science and humanity, and the ongoing work

at participating universities in Germany working with seven different modules covering both nature and social science related to sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.

#### Projects for participating universities

The BUP has also worked on strengthening the co-operation with participating universities as a whole. The project Internationalisation in Practice improved our ties with international offices at universities and university leaderships, through specific projects targeted at participating universities. In 2019, the Coordinating Secretariat began building a network of people working at international offices at participating universities. This work has developed into a co-operation among ten universities focused on internationalisation at each university. A concrete outcome has been the project Digital at home that is funded by the Swedish Institute.

Another project underway with the aim to support universities is Implementing Sustainability at Universities, which started in 2021. It includes a webinar series, a survey targeting leaders at member universities, and another survey directed to students. The aim is to support universities in adopting sustainable practices in the areas of teaching, research, and campus management.



Uppsala 2019, participants at the BUP conference in the project Internationalization in Practice, funded by the Swedish Institute.

Photo: Pontus Ambros

### BUP Strategy 2021-2025

As the previous Strategy 2017-2020 was about to come to an end, reporting and reflecting as well as the planning for a new period 2021-2025 started in fall 2020. In short, the main focus of the work in 2017-2018 was on organisation, management, economy and communication. In 2019 student activities were on the agenda, 2020 the focus was on researchers. In the new Strategy 2021-2025, we will continue to develop the work we have started the latest years. However, the Action Plan for 2021 have the main focus on teachers and students, by developing new courses and modules and even some full courses, to be digitalised on the BUP Course Platform.

### Networking, technology and the Covid 19 pandemic

Technology has brought us a number of new tools and platforms that facilitate the networking of students, university teachers, and researchers. In recent years, the BUP's communication and outreach has become more planned, clear and effective. As a result, the BUP has a growing number of followers and subscribers on social media. All communication efforts contribute to maintaining and improving the lively network of BUP colleagues, within each of the ten BUP themes as well as in general.

A factor that forced us to learn and use new technology was the Covid-19 pandemic. The restrictions influenced our everyday lives as well as the work within the BUP. The need to move an increasing number of activities online represented a kind of "paradigm shift" in the BUP, with the positive effects of being more inclusive, and being able to give more colleagues the opportunity to attend activities.

The intensive use of technology is also a way to revisit our past, of working online and remotely across long distances. In the 1990s the BUP connected members of academia through satellite seminars. Now we are again interconnecting the teachers, researchers, and students of the Baltic Sea Region with the help of technology, and it shows that we were on the right track 30 years ago, and still are.

### The BUP 3.0

The Baltic University Programme has grown to be one of the largest university networks worldwide, with a total of 97 participating universities at the end of 2021. There is undoubtedly more to say about these past years of the Programme, and even more to predict and wish for the future. As a result of passion for internationalisation and regional co-operation's, teaching, research and innovations, and a hard work of hundreds of enthusiastic colleagues from the participating universities and its administrative and strategy-shaping bodies, the BUP is in good hands. Together we learn from each other, by communicating, cooperating and contributing to the Programme. The focus on sustainable development and education for sustainable development, as well as promoting inter-cultural and inter- multi- and transdisciplinary co-operation's, is more important than ever.



Madeleine together with colleagues taking part in the Pre-rectors Conference in Uppsala in 2017.

Photo: Sylwester Nagorka

## Description of the meeting in Konopnica

Ireneusz Zbicinski, Professor, Łódź University of Technology, Poland, National Centre Director in Poland, engaged in the BUP since 1991



In 2000 I organized the first ever BUP Centre Directors meeting. After two initial days at the university, we moved to Konopnica, situated 70 km from Łódź, to a manor owned by Łódź University of Technology. Being in Konopnica earlier I took part in a performance by a local folk band that were singing folk songs, it was professional and very good. Afterwards, I called the manager of the manor and asked him to book this band for a performance with the BUP Centre Directors.

A quarter to six in the evening, the doors opened, a strange guy entered the room and announced that they will be playing for us. I went over to the manager with complains, then he said that he changed the band to one that would perform a kind of music that was more pleasant to listen to during the dinner compared to listening to the “four screaming ladies” from the folk band. I returned to the room devastated and described what has happened. The atmosphere in the room was frosty. But when the band, with the symptomatic name “The Flowers of the Street”, started to play easy and light music, people gradually relaxed, some joined the band playing guitar and drums, Paula and Maria even formed a temporary band “The Screaming Ladies” and people started dancing. We did not notice how suddenly six hours had passed. The guys from the band said that they had never seen adults playing like children. That was the best dinner party in the BUP history but the line between success and disaster was very thin.

## BUP togetherness

Simona Halasova, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia, Student Ambassador autumn 2021 - spring 2022, engaged in the BUP since 2019



My journey with The Baltic University Programme began in 2019 when I started studying at university. In the very first year, I attended the BUP student conference in Estonia, where a number of interesting lectures on sustainability were held by leading experts. Apart from the educational side, I met a lot of amazing people, with whom I shared a lot of beautiful experiences that I still bring with me and we are still in touch to this day.

I already knew then that I was very interested in the BUP topics and I wanted to continue to focus on them. Therefore, two years later, in 2021, I became a BUP Student Ambassador for the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. My aim has been to bring the Programme to the attention of students at our university.

I know that this community is full of great, skilful and above all kind-hearted people who are trying to save the world, and I am sure that together we can do it. We just have to fight and never give up.



Students at the 2019 student conference.

Photo: Pontus Ambros

# A long lasting BUP relationship

Tiina Elvisto, Associate Professor, PhD, Tallinn University, Estonia, National Centre Director in Estonia, engaged in the BUP since 1993



In 1993, I started working at Tallinn University, an established institution but one with a new name that reflected its new broader mission and outlook. Previously it had been the Tallinn Pedagogical University and before Estonia regained its independence, Tallinn Pedagogical Institute. Shortly after I started at the university, my department head sent me to meet Vice-Rector Madis Lepik. He explained that The Baltic University Programme (BUP) had invited our university to join its network. I knew I was in trouble. It was only two years after our country had regained its independence. I could make my way through scientific papers in English, but I had no idea how to pronounce the written words. During my school and university studies, I had learned German. The instruction methods made those German classes dreadfully tedious. I hated learning foreign languages during my school and university time.

The BUP network appeared to offer exciting opportunities for our students. Unlike me, many of them were proficient in spoken English, so we joined the Programme. At the end of 1993 our students took part in the Space Bridge via satellite which connected them to scientists and students from across the Baltic Sea Region. Since 1994 we have taught BUP courses at our university, both *The Baltic Sea Environment*, and *A Sustainable Baltic Region*. More than 570 Tallinn University students have received certificates from the BUP and Uppsala University that they have successfully passed the examinations for those courses. At Tallinn University we also have used *Education for Change* course material in our teacher's education. My students have praised BUP courses for their real world and real-life content. During BUP courses our students have participated in seminars, excursions,

and poster conferences. Their posters have been displayed in the foyer of our main university building for everybody to view. More than 50 Tallinn University students have enthusiastically participated in BUP international student conferences, in summer courses at Hel, on the Masurian Lakes or in the Tatra Mountains, and courses on board the sailing ships, Frédéric Chopin and Pogoria.

Over the years Tallinn University instructors have been asked to contribute to BUP textbooks. They have also been enthusiastic participants in BUP conferences and seminars on a wide range of topics including innovations in active instructional methods and emerging knowledge in the environmental sciences. All of this has been both exciting and useful in our work. These active instructional methods were new to us. They had not been used in history, social science, or foreign language instruction in Soviet-era Estonian schools.

The Baltic University Programme is a great network. Through the BUP I have been fortunate to become acquainted with inspiring teachers, scientists, and other BUP colleagues. In particular, I wish to mention BUP leaders Lars Rydén and Paula Lindroos, and the helpful and energetic staff at the BUP Coordinating Secretariat in Uppsala. At the BUP Secretariat, I especially wish to acknowledge Maria Hejna and Lyudmyla Babak. They have been outstanding in arranging productive connections to members in the network. My students, my colleagues, and I are all grateful to be part of this network.

I would like to share one memorable episode. In the early 1980s, as a young scientist, I was a member of a project that was compiling a vegetation map of our internationally significant wetland, Matsalu Nature Reserve, which today is Matsalu National Park. It spans an area of 490 km<sup>2</sup> in western Estonia. The project leader died unexpectedly and we were in need of aerial photographs to complete the map. At that time, aerial photographs were treated as a state secret of the Soviet Union. In order to have access to the aerial photos needed for our work, I got confronted with the choice of whether or not to sign a document committing me to never exchange



The student Keit Pillak giving a presentation on the sustainable use of the algae *Furcellaria* during the BUP course *A Sustainable Baltic Region* at Tallinn University in 2004.

Photo: Tiina Elvisto

a single word with foreigners. I was told that if I signed the document allowing access to photos, I would never be allowed to travel abroad. On one hand, we needed the aerial photos for the work of several years to be correctly finished, and on the other hand, I was eager to see the world and participate in international conferences and meetings outside the Soviet Union. I concluded that our scientific research was the priority and rationalized this by thinking that there were many places worth visiting in the Soviet Union. I signed the document. When we finally got access to the photos, I could only view them while sitting in secure archives. There was no possibility to take them to the field! Of course, on these photos there was nothing except flooded meadows, reed-beds, the waters of the bay, a few islands, some forested areas, and a few farmhouses. The photos had nothing else, not even the “clouds” which I learned later were often placed on the photos to hide military objects.

This restriction on me remained and I was not even able to visit the socialist countries that were allies of the Soviet Union. My attempts to get visas always ended in nothing but silence from the authorities. The restrictions were so severe that when I attended international conferences in the Soviet Union I always had a “companion” with me, usually a young KGB staff member accompanying me mornings till night to make sure that I only spoke with the “right” kind of people. I still have no idea what state secrets I knew.

Thankfully, ours is a changed world. As citizens of the Baltic States we are living in our own countries and are able to have free, open and productive exchanges with colleagues wherever they are located. And now, unlike before, I love to learn foreign languages.



The student Kalle Kebbinau giving a presentation about solar cells made using blueberry juice during the BUP course *A Sustainable Baltic Region* at Tallinn University in 2004.

Photo: Tiina Elvisto



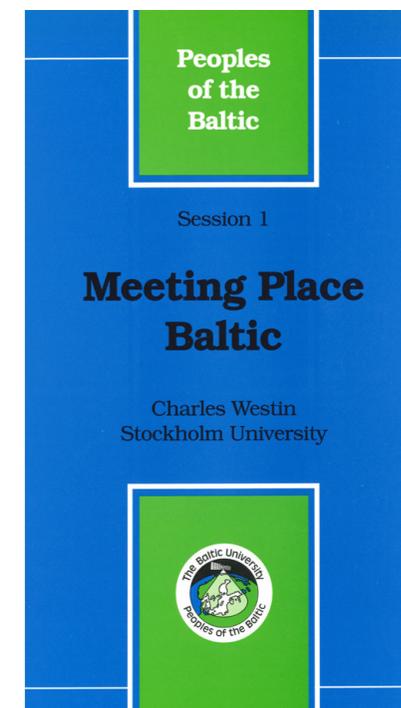
Participants at the poster presentations during the BUP course *A Sustainable Baltic Region* at Tallinn University 2006. After the presentations the posters have been available to view in the lobby of Tallinn University for two weeks.

Photo: Tiina Elvisto

## Meeting Place Baltic

Anton Mikhailov, PhD, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia, Mentor of *A Sustainable Baltic Region* (1999-2001), engaged in the BUP since 1993

Meeting Place Baltic – that was the name of the first session of the course *Peoples of the Baltic* with which it all started for me some two years after the Programme began its history. I remember those first live satellite TV sessions. Just imagine, no tape recordings that shortly after replaced direct TV-bridges (we were waiting for them with excitement!), no high-speed internet, social networking or YouTube, but all the same, the most valuable thing about the Programme is not technology (though it greatly helps) but the people behind it! With my personal “meetingplace Baltic” I have got a valuable and unforgettable international experience with different people from all around the Baltic Sea. Later on, some of them became pen pals or friends and one special person became even slightly more than that. Time changes and so do we all, I regret that those circumstances of new openness and trust are hardly repeatable, at least now as I see it here. Besides, it’s a pity that my university no longer takes part in the Programme which is aimed to make our part of the world better and sustainable and new generations of people responsible. Trying to be more positive though, I congratulate the BUP and all the people that run the Programme for its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Whatever comes next, those happy Baltic memories are always with me, a great help in my life, thank you. I will, without a doubt, recommend everyone to participate in the Programme. With wishes of success and hopes for a better future!



The cover of the book *Meeting Place Baltic*, the first session of the course *Peoples of the Baltic*, printed in 1995.

# The BUP from a Vice Chancellor perspective

Eva Åkesson, Professor, Lund University, Sweden, former Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University, engaged in the BUP since 2012



The Baltic University Programme has established an important meeting place for the universities in the Baltic Sea Region. BUP has grown over the years to become one of the largest university networks worldwide, and much has been accomplished during the last 30 years. That said and celebrated, we can also conclude that there are matters left to do. The statutes of BUP stipulate: “The Baltic University Programme focuses on questions of sustainable development, environmental protection and democracy in the Baltic Sea Region. The aim is to support the key role that universities play in a democratic, peaceful and sustainable development”. Questions regarding sustainable development and democracy have not decreased in relevance, rather the opposite, during the last decades.

Let’s take a stroll down memory lane and look through some of my material from conferences and meetings arranged by the BUP. I had the pleasure to participate in the rector’s meetings as vice-chancellor of Uppsala University during 2012-2020. At the fourth Rectors Conference in 2014, hosted by Uppsala University at Campus Gotland, I had the privilege to welcome the delegates. In my welcoming speech I highlighted:

“A Programme does not only consist of cultural and intellectual content. It also has value content. So what are the values that we want to support and develop in The Baltic University Programme network? They are very much in line with the general philosophy for sustainable development. That is:

- We want to stress that our physical environment needs to be protected. Environmental Science is still important.

- We want to stress that our physical resources need to be used cleverly and economically. Environmental Management and good environmental technology is important.
- We want to stress the importance of a strong and growing economy.
- And finally, we want to stress that we would like to live in just, peaceful and well-governed societies. Development of democracy and international co-operation should be high on our agenda.”

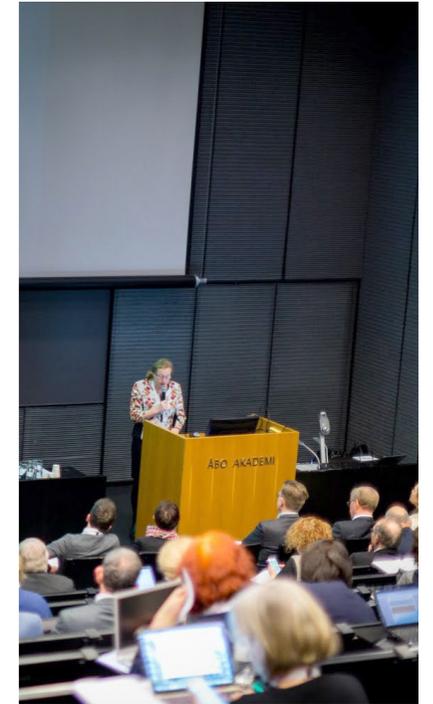
I believe we can all agree upon that these points are just as relevant today, not the least the last one to have democracy and international co-operation high on our agenda. The Baltic University Programme’s contributions to an international meeting place for all universities around the Baltic Sea cannot be underestimated, numerous collaborations and initiatives have come about due to BUP activities.

At the fifth BUP Rectors Conference, hosted by Åbo Akademi, Finland, I emphasized the important role of our students. Within the BUP, we provide vital opportunities for today’s students and prepare them for a life of international co-operation and friendship. Without co-operation, the world is worse off. The Baltic University Programme has sent this message to many students. Every year close to 9000 students register to a BUP course. All these students are introduced to the ideas underlying the BUP. It is our students who are the future and will carry the torch of knowledge for a better world.

At a meeting in Uppsala in 2019 my message to the participants were as follows:

“Your presence here is testimony to the success of the BUP and its continued relevance. The reason is of course that we have managed together to create a network that benefits all the participants. Today, at a time when our region faces renewed challenges, we want to take important new steps to strengthen our bonds. The mission of BUP as conveyed in the statutes, are as relevant today and will be tomorrow too.”

The planned activities during 2020 had to be cancelled or rescheduled, for



Eva addressing the participants at the fifth BUP Rectors Conference at Åbo Akademi University in 2018.

Photo: Sylwester Nagorka

the BUP as for everybody due to the global pandemic that hit the world. One idea, we had for the meeting in August 2020, was to invite all the rectors to participate in SAIL and go on a sailing trip and have a joint seminar on the subject of sustainability and the role of universities around the Baltic Sea. I do hope this idea will be realized in the future!

To conclude, much has been done and achieved, but there are new challenges ahead of us, challenges which are easier for us to address together rather than alone. I want to end with the old African proverb which says:

”If you want to walk fast, walk alone - if you want to walk far, walk together.”

So, I hope all universities around the Baltic Sea Region will continue to walk together for at least 30 years more. Congratulations to 30 years of successful and important collaboration around the Baltic Sea Region!



Welcome address by Eva at the conference Internationalization in Practice, in 2019, held at Uppsala University.

Photo: Pontus Ambros

## A greeting from Slovakia's Nitra

Dušan Húska, Professor, PhD, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia, engaged in the BUP since 1991

Nitra is outside the Baltic Sea basin, and only seven percent of the Slovak territory belongs to the Wisla basin. But in 1991 we joined The Baltic University Programme (BUP). This year I visited Kaunas and I was informed about the BUP. Based on this, I asked Professor Lars Rydén to accept Czechoslovakia in the program as well. Our request was accepted and I was lucky enough to participate in person at many workshops in different BUP countries and we also had the opportunity to welcome BUP representatives to our country in Nitra.

I am glad that even after 30 years, the Programme continues successfully and have played a large role in increasing contacts between teachers and university students in the Baltic Sea basin. I wish the further development of the Programme for our common benefit. I would especially like to greet Lars, Maria, Paula as well as others from various universities with whom I was fortunate to meet. I wish lots of success and health to all present members of the BUP.

## ”It’s our friends little microbes”

Mirjam Weituschat, MSc, previously active at Greifswald University, Germany, former Student Representative 2018 - 2021 and course coordinator, engaged in the BUP since 2016



During my very first BUP event (BUP student conference in Ratnieki, Latvia 2016), the Centre Director Meeting took place simultaneously. So, I got to meet not only a lot of interesting students, but also many ”old hands” in the BUP. Next to their expert knowledge, the latter also allowed us to profit from the ”BUP spirit”. We had an enjoyable international dinner together, had discussions at eye level, and sang songs together. One professor (whose name I don’t remember, unfortunately) even set up a spontaneous choir of students and Centre Directors. Together, we enacted some of his self-composed songs while he accompanied the choir at the piano. One song that is still stuck in my head went like this: ”It’s our friends little microbes” clap, clap ”They are doing a good job” clap, clap. I do not remember any other lyrics or the melody of that song, but I bet the verses were deep and adorable, too. I would love to be reminded of the words and melody of that beautiful song, so if this professor reads my story, feel welcome to contact me. In any way, this and the other impressions and opportunities at my first BUP event made me stick with The Baltic University Programme ever since.



Conference participants at the 2016 student conference in Ratnieki, Latvia, together with the German Centre Director Professor Bernd Delakowitz from the University of Applied Sciences Zittau/Görlitz.

Photo: Mirjam Weituschat



All conference participants at the student conference in 2016 in Ratnieki, Latvia, during a sightseeing tour in Riga before going to the conference venue.

Photo: BUP archive

# Success by knowledge

Tuula Eriksson, Sociologist, previously active at Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Sweden, engaged in the BUP since 1991

It is with great joy and pride that I congratulate The Baltic University Programme (BUP) on 30 interesting and successful years. Since the start, I have had the privilege of participating, following and contributing in various BUP activities. The work and development that has taken place during these 30 years has had a great significance for research and education in the entire Baltic Sea Region. Even outside the BUP's area of activity, when I was at a research conference in Beijing, The Baltic University Programme was mentioned as a successful inter disciplinary collaboration!

I have had the privilege of following BUP's development from the early, somewhat tentative, searching and small-scale start to what it is today - an impressive organisation with an extensive network and around 90 participating universities as well as a number of other stakeholders and actors in the ten countries that are a part of the Programme.

The success of the BUP have been partly possible thanks to all the enthusiasts who have gradually and purposefully driven the development forward with the vision of working for a better and more sustainable world. Thank you to everyone who contributed to all of this in different ways and whom I have had the privilege of getting to know over the years. Many became colleagues and friends for life. Another important success factor has been the support from Uppsala University and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, who early on understood the importance and potential of an institution and organisation like the BUP.

I became involved in BUP's work at an early stage thanks to one of BUP's many zealots, the highly valued late colleague Professor Per G Berg, Swedish



University of Agricultural Sciences. The result was many and long work shifts that culminated in a large number of trips in the Baltic Sea Region and collaborations within the framework of both research and education.

The early years were characterized by great enthusiasm and curiosity - there was so much to learn and we learned a lot from each other, knowledge that today constitutes a stable foundation for the Programme. I still remember the welcoming warmth we received when we visited colleagues in the Baltic States and Russia. I particularly remember a trip to one of the member countries in the early years. We had a unique program where we started by bus early in the morning and made a lot of stops along the way where we visited interesting places and seminars. The BUP founder and previous director had organized a superb program but one item was missing in the program, food and coffee. He had thought of everything except this little worldly problem, food. Despite this, we sat contentedly on the bus and shared what we happened to have in our bags, biscuits, drinks, fruit and candy, and no one complained until one of our Polish colleagues modestly asked "Sorry, when do you usually eat in Sweden?". For eleven hours we had lived only on knowledge and snacks. After the issue of food came up, there was a shorter stop at a hot dog kiosk because we didn't want to lose valuable time in the program. Another 14 hours later we arrived at the hotel. We fell asleep happy, full of new impressions, those were great times in the pioneer spirit! Despite the fact that many of our colleagues did not feel comfortable with English, the conversation flowed largely in thanks to dictionaries and body language. There were many laughs and new insights.

Today, the BUP is an established organisation that has to face many new major challenges due to the war in the immediate area, the acutely burning environmental problems, food issues and the rampant financial costs of electricity and energy – interdependent problems that require quick and sensible solutions. I think that the BUP has an important role in this work thanks to the interdisciplinary diversity that exists at the participating universities that are part of the BUP family. Due to increasingly rapid changes in our world, the importance of intensive research and education is increasing. Thank you to the BUP and all colleagues in the region for being there!



The late Professor Per G Berg, a dear BUP colleague, pictured with his camera ready during a study visit in Jelgava, Latvia in the early 2000s.

Photo: BUP archive

# Baltic Mission Possible

Magnus Lehman, BA, previously active at Uppsala University, Sweden, former Producer at the BUP Coordinating Secretariat, engaged in the BUP since 1995

My journey with The Baltic University Programme started in late spring 1995. After only a few weeks I was sent to Latvia to prepare for a TV-series for the new planned course material *A Sustainable Baltic Region*. In Riga I was introduced to Uldis Cekulis who worked as a video producer for the Ministry of Environment. He invited me immediately to follow his team for a film mission. The soviet radar station Skrunnda, which had been part of the anti-ballistic warning system was to be demolished the next day. The symbolic event happened on 4 May 1995, which also was the five-year anniversary of independence. The Latvian film crew were professionals and equipped with a 35 mm film camera to capture when the main structure of the complex, a huge 19 storey building, was blown up with dynamite. Since I had just bought a small hi-8 amateur camera Uldis suggested that my objective was to film happy and cheering Latvians who had gathered to watch. It was a gloomy rain drizzling day and I walked around among the crowd with my camera hanging around my neck waiting for the blast.

Everything went well with the crew who captured great shoots but my disappointment was great when me and Uldis looked at my footage which opened with a very long sequence showing my dirty shoes walking around. When the blast could be heard the view moved quickly up in position and stopped. Then again walking shoes. No cheering and happy faces to be seen. I had accidentally managed to press "rec" when I walked around waiting and "stop" when I was about to record. Total failure on my part!

In 1998 the Russian military personnel and families left Skrunnda and the former large military base with its 70 buildings and residential estates be-



The former radar receiver in Skrunnda.

Photo: Laima Gūtmane

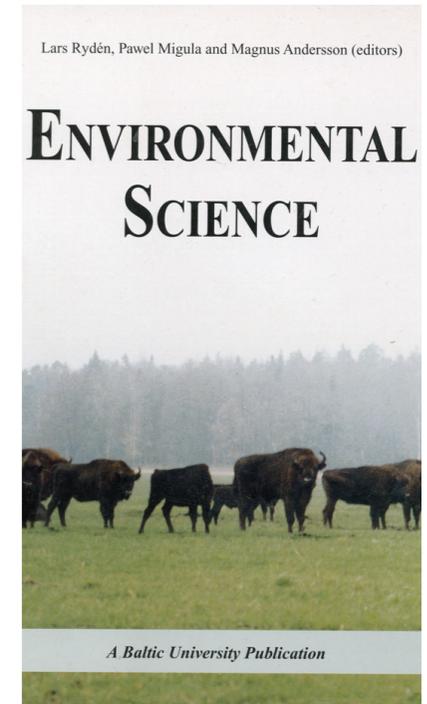
came a huge dilapidated ghost town for years afterward, I think it still is deserted. Uldis Cekulis continued to work with the BUP, he started his own environmental film company called Viides Filmu Studija. He later contributed to our projects with several videos and also won several awards for his documentary films. The TV-series for the course package *A Sustainable Baltic Region* was finally produced in 1997. It was called *Mission Possible* and consisted of ten films (50 minutes each) in which a film team and a group of students tour the region and report.

Working with the BUP I have mainly done layout for books. My greatest challenge was *Environmental Science* with its 824 pages and weighting two kilos. The book was a great accomplishment for the editors, director Lars Rydén, Pawel Migula, Magnus Andersson and the other 80 scientists from the region who produced the content of the book.

In spite of my initial failure on my first mission for the BUP I have also worked with video production as an editor and sometimes also filming. Over 60 hours of video was produced between 1991-2011 for the BUP courses. The films were always produced in close co-operation with scientist and also TV-companies from the region. The VHS-videos were used extensively at many of the universities running BUP courses. Many (if not all) of the films can be viewed at The Baltic University Programme's Youtube channel. A summary is presented in the film BUP 25 years.

All my years at the BUP were filled with many interesting and inspiring experiences. The most rewarding however was in 2003 when I participated in the BUP summer course (later named SAIL). Together with 40 students and teachers from the region we cruised the Baltic Sea on board the polish barquentine STS Pogoria. My film from the experience can be viewed on Youtube and is called Sailing with Pogoria (in four parts).

To work for a better future for planet Earth is a great privilege, and I am grateful for the many years together with wonderful colleagues at the Coordinating Secretariat and for many interesting meetings with people of the Baltic Sea Region.



The cover of the book *Environmental Science* that was published by the BUP in 2003.



A print screen of a part of the intro to the BUP's youtube series *Mission Possible*. The complete series can be found on the BUP website.

# Pictures from the first decade 1991 - 2001



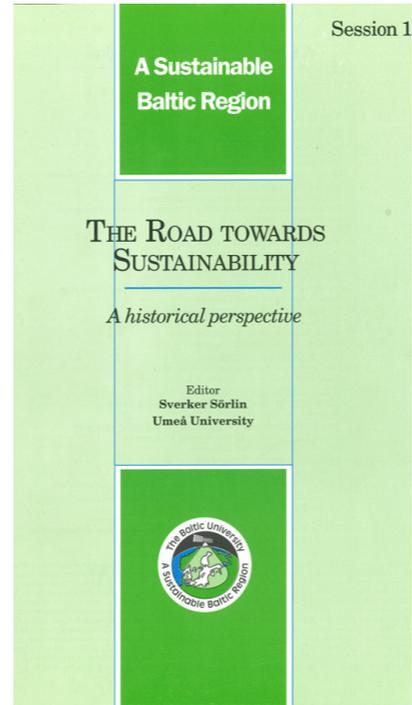
A photo from one of the first BUP student conferences during the early 1990s, held in the lecture hall at Lodz University of Technology Campus in Rogow, Poland.

Photo: BUP archive



A meeting in Kaunas, Lithuania, with a city development project. From left Remigius Ciegis, Kaunas University of Technology Vilnius campus and Saulius Lukosius, Kaunas city.

Photo: BUP archive



The front cover of the book *The Road towards Sustainability* which covers the first session of the course *A Sustainable Baltic Region*, published in 1997.



Participants at the Sustainability Applied in International Learning course, abbreviated (SAIL), then called BUP summer course, for students with the tall ship Pogoria in 1999.

Photo: BUP archive



Centre Directors Sergei Dorozkho, Belarus, Victor Ionov, Russia, Linas Kliucininkas, Lithuania, Tatjana Polajeva, Estonia and Christer Nordlund, Sweden. Pictured is also Maria Hejna, Project Coordinator at the BUP Coordinating Secretariat.

Photo: BUP archive



Pictured are Wanda Ignatowska, Maria Hejna and Ireneusz Zbicinski in 2000, when the BUP Centre was opened at Lodz University of Technology.

Photo: BUP archive



Tatjana Polajeva, Tallinn University of Technology and Elena Korshuk, Belarusian State University during a visit to the Coordinating Secretariat at Uppsala University.

Photo: BUP archive



Pictured are, from the left, Uffe Wikström, Åbo Akademi University, TV producer and main producer of the series Peoples of the Baltic 1993-94, and Roine Modigh, Teracom, Sweden.

Photo: BUP archive



Parts of the BUP Coordinating Secretariat, then located on Öfre Slottsgatan in Uppsala. Pictured are, from the left, Magnus Lehman, Fredrik Degerbäck, Maria Hejna and Christian Andersson.

Photo: BUP archive

# Pictures from the second decade 2001 - 2011



Celebration within the project Sustainable Urban Patterns around the Baltic Sea (SUPERBS) in Jelgava in 2002. The project was financed by Interreg IIC, The Swedish Institute, The KK-Foundation and SIDA. The person that is furthest to the left in the picture is Madeleine Granvik, the current BUP Director, then participating as a scholar.

Photo: BUP archive



Participants at the conference University Education for Sustainable Development held in Gdansk in 2005.

Photo: BUP archive



Celebration of the BUP's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the BUP Coordinating Secretariat in Uppsala in 2006.

Photo: BUP archive



Teachers' Training in ESD for Russian speaking teachers in Petrozavodsk, December 2008.

Photo: Lyudmyla Babak



At the Rectors Conference in 2006, a group of participants in the Chancellors Room at Uppsala University main building after having signed the membership agreement of The Baltic University Programme (then The Baltic University).

Photo: BUP archive



A moment of music on board Pogoria in 2003 during a BUP summer course (later named Sustainability Applied in International Learning, abbreviated SAIL). Pictured to the left with the violin is Professor Allan Rodhe, Uppsala University, with the guitar is Karol Bajaj, University of Warszawa, Student Representative and furthest to the right in the back is Terje Petterson, Uppsala University, Student Representative.

Photo: BUP archive



Iveta Lacauniece and Mara Urtane, Latvia University of Agriculture, partners in the research project The local Community as an Arena for Sustainability in Townscapes in a Baltic Sea perspective (2002-2007). Project leader was Prof. Per G Berg, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, with partners from Poland, Russia, Latvia, Denmark and Sweden. Current BUP Director Madeleine Granvik was a PhD student in this research project.

Photo: BUP archive



Participants at the BUP Mazury Lakes Cruise in 2005, organised by the BUP National Centre at Lodz University of Technology in Poland. First to the left is Agnieszka Stolecka, the main organiser. During the event there were lectures and presentations in the mornings and afternoons in every marina. During the sailing measurements of water quality were performed, after the event a short report of the water quality in the lakes in the Mazury region was created.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski

# Pictures from the third decade 2011 - 2021



Participants together with Alan AtKisson, second from the right, during the 2011 Teacher training in Turku arranged by the BUP Associated Secretariat in Finland. Current Centre Director Cecilia Lundberg pictured second to the left.

Photo: Christian Andersson



Participants at the Pre-rectors meeting in 2014, held in Uppsala. During the meeting there were, for instance, discussions regarding the program for the Rectors Conference.

Photo: Christian Andersson



Student Representative Pontus Ambros giving a presentation for the participants during the BUP student conference 2013 in Rogów, Poland. Today Pontus has the role of Project administrator at the BUP Coordinating Secretariat in Uppsala.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski



Participants at the 2018 BUP PhD Students Training, in Rogów, organised by the BUP National Centre in Poland and BUP's Associated Secretariat at Lodz University of Technology.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski



Jennifer Pohlmann and Walter Leal, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. Walter coordinates the The Baltic Research and Publications Office (BUPRaP) that aims to foster BUP colleagues research activities and enhance their publications output and profile.

Photo: BUP archive



A workshop during the project EduBalt, held in Tallin in January 2019. The project focused training for academic teachers in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Photo: Lyudmyla Babak



Project coordinator Lyudmyla Babak, together with Walter Leal, Centre Director in Germany, at the BUP Rectors Conference 2018 held at Åbo Akademi University. Lyudmyla has been a vital part of the BUP Coordinating Secretariat since 2007, she is in large to thank for many of our successful events and projects over the years.

Photo: Sylwester Nagorka



BUP Director, Associate Professor, Madeleine Granvik giving the welcoming speech at the first BUP Symposium in 2020. The Symposium is an annual event where BUP colleagues can disseminate recent research and where new discussions and collaborations can begin.

Photo: BUP archive



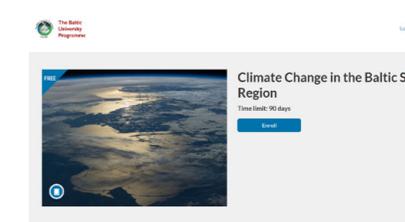
Participating students at the BUP Sea Yawl Voyage in 2019 in Polesk Russia. While sailing in the Curonian lagoon the students got an opportunity to learn more about sustainable development.

Photo: Pontus Ambros



A meeting in Kaunas with the project Baltic Sea Region Climate Change Curriculum (BSRCCC). About 30 researchers from eleven participating universities in nine BUP countries took part in and contributed to the project.

Photo: Pontus Ambros



The first massive open online course launched at the BUP Course Platform will be *Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Region*. The Platform is developed as a support to our participating universities in their teaching in the field of sustainable development.

Photo: BUP archive

# My BUP story: the beginnings

Iryna Kriba, PhD, Ivan Franko State University, Ukraine, National Centre Director in Ukraine, engaged in the BUP since 1999



I didn't plan to contribute with a specific memory since, due to there being a great number of fantastic BUP events and people it was too difficult to figure out one memory that was more important than others. But then, I looked back at how it all started and there appeared what follows:

A true love story starts unexpectedly. I lived the calm and peaceful life of a linguist, knowing nothing about it at all, and all of a sudden, my colleague, a BUP Centre Director, asked me to attend a conference, because somebody who was supposed to go declined at the last moment. My task was merely to assist with interpreting to a more competent person. I was provided with materials and during the bus journey to Warsaw I tried to get into the subject, yet not too successfully. So, on a cold and rainy day in March 1999 I arrived in Ustro, Poland, and it all starts.

I was greatly impressed by the special atmosphere which I had never seen at a conference before. I met wonderful people, Lars, Maria, Irek - and felt good! After the first session, Lars asked me: "Do you understand anything?", and I frankly answered: "Nothing!" I still believed I would just be interpreting. How naïve!

At lunch I met Walter, and, for some reason, I then tried communicating in German. Poor Walter! I wouldn't risk doing that now. Later, at the party, I met Pekka from Umeå. He was the first Swede I had met in my life. He had never met any of my compatriots either. We had much to talk about. During the party each delegation had to demonstrate some talents, so my colleague and I sang a folk song (a duet for the first time in my life) which was yet

another challenge. I somehow got through it with encouraging applause from the audience. Then followed dancing (till four in the morning!).

The next day started with a presentation from an American expert about ecological footprints. I sat right in front of him as he enthusiastically explained it all, and I desperately tried to grasp anything at all (not helped by the fact that I was dancing all night).

Out of sheer politeness, I started taking notes. How wise of me. After the presentation, there was a group exercise, and my notes came in handy. Together with Kristina from Riga, a true expert on the subject, I presented our groups results.

When the conference was over and I came back home I considered it all a nice adventure without any long-term consequences. However, after some time, I was offered to attend a conference in Tvärminne in Finland. The reason was simple - in the invitation it was written: field station in Finland, late November, strange name of the place, only one person from your country invited. Nobody was eager to go. At first, I refused as well, but curiosity took over and I agreed. It was my first visit to Finland, I met new interesting people - Paula and Sinikka, who later became my good friends - but I still did not think it was serious. Actually, I had already fallen in love, not realizing it, though. On my way back, due to an unexpected landing in Krakow, Wanda from Jagellonian University organized an unforgettable visit to Collegium Maius for me and it has also become one of the brightest memories in my life.

And then, thanks to Paula's idea of an environmental English course, comes the seminar in Vitebsk in 2001, where I finally understood that I was a part of the team. The mousetrap had snapped! There was no way out and I was happy about that.

Since then there have been many conferences in my home country and all around the Baltic Sea Region, meetings with outstanding scientists, talented people and fantastic personalities. After many years, some of the people can



The 2016 Teacher Conference and celebration of BUP's 25th anniversary in Rogów. Pictured is Iryna together with Professor Orest Ivakhiv from Lviv Polytechnics.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski

seem new to me, but suddenly it becomes clear that I made my first BUP presentation in Ustron together with Kristina, who later became the BUP Centre Director for Latvia, that I first got acquainted with Sinikka from Åbo Akademi in the sauna in Tvärminne, that I also met Tiina from Estonia in Tvärminne (not in the sauna), as well as many others. There are similar encounters with a number of fantastic people in my own country whom I have met due to falling in love with the BUP. But these were my first impressions and therefore the sweetest ones in my memory.

That's the story of the beginning of my workplace romance which has added so many special moments to my life and I am happy that it is a love story that is still going strong.



Iryna gives a speech at the BUP Teachers Conference in Kazimierz, Poland, in 2012.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski

## A meeting on environmental education

Lars Rydén, Professor Emeritus, Uppsala University, Sweden, former BUP Director 1991 - 2007 and 2015 - 2016, founder of the Programme and the person that hatched the idea that has grown into what the BUP is today



You may remember that Kalmar is on the Baltic Sea coast, in Sweden. After a meeting, three of us, Per-Arne Lindström, Linas Kliuncinikas, and myself, went out to the coast to swim. It was after several weeks of very hot weather, I think this was in 1992. We arrived late in the evening, it was already fairly dark.

We jumped into the water and it, oohh, lighted up. There was this bioluminescence. It was such an extraordinary experience! When you jumped into the water, you were jumping into an explosion of light. And you saw all the fish! Especially the flounders, lying on this rather shallow sand bottom, just resting. And then they jumped away and you could see where they went. You could almost pick them up by hand. I have never been part of such an experience in the Baltic Sea, before or after.

Note:

Linas was at the time a student at the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania. He was one of the very first people in Lithuania to join and he has made important contributions to the BUP, as teacher, as researcher and as national coordinator over many years. He met his wife in the BUP network and now with three sons they are one of our BUP families.

Per-Arne is of Swedish descent but he was living in Germany at the time, working as a pedagogue, teacher and principle at schools with basis at Lüneburg University where he started several BUP courses. He made important contributions by expanding the BUP in Germany and contributing to research contacts in the area of regenerative design.

# Alternative energy sources

Halina Haurylka, Associate Professor, previously active at Belarusian State University, Belarus, engaged in the BUP since 2010



My motivation for participating in The Baltic University Programme was due to the fact that I was born in Kaunas (Lithuania), graduated from the 13th secondary school in Vilnius, worked at the Shvara factory before entering the Belarusian State University in Minsk. Therefore, after graduating from Belarusian State University, I really wanted to return to the Baltic States in a new capacity, as a teacher, and give lectures about my native land, where I spent my childhood and youth. My favourite resorts are Palanga and the Curonian Spit, where I vacationed with my parents, and later with my family. The Baltic Sea, which I consider the most beautiful, and the people living in this region, the most friendly, who have great respect for their traditions and history. The Baltic University Programme is of particular importance to me, as it gives students the opportunity to transfer knowledge about the history, economy, and traditions of the peoples of the Baltic States and the Baltic Sea Region as a whole. Students know the countries of the region well, as they visited these countries mainly as tourists together with their parents. Therefore, when they prepare presentations and reports on the topic of sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region, they do it with great love and very professionally.

In October 2010, on my own initiative, I applied to participate in the seminar Alternative Energy Sources. The seminar was attended by representatives of various countries of the Baltic Sea Region, including three representatives from Lithuania, with whom I had a full understanding and close personal contacts. We flew together by plane to Vilnius. And later I went to Minsk to tell my colleagues and students about the experience that Sweden has in using alternative energy sources. There were well-organized

excursions to enterprises and private firms that successfully solve issues related to the use of green energy. We are especially proud of the students who have successfully established themselves within the BUP. My student Anna Pintusova passed the competition and was invited to participate in the international student conference organized by the BUP (April 2012, Rogów, Poland). Anna Pintusova participated in the conference and received a diploma from The Baltic University Programme. About the results of the student conference, the exchange of experience, she prepared an article for the Belarusian State University newspaper with photos and a high assessment of the events in which she took an active part. The cooperation between our faculty and The Baltic University Programme has lasted over the years. In October 2020, a seminar was held at Belarusian State University, it was called Baltic Sea Region - Cooperation without limits?, where during my presentation I showed a photo of the participants of the 2010 seminar in Uppsala. The head of the delegation from Kaliningrad could not contain his surprise as he said "So this is us Professor Krasnov." It was a joy and an understanding that cooperation within the Baltic Region continues and has no borders.



Halina giving a presentation for BUP colleagues.

Photo: BUP archive

# When one event has a far reaching meaning

Sylwester Nagórka, MSc, previously active at University of Warsaw, Poland, former Student Representative 2017 - 2019, engaged in the BUP since 2017



I always say that The Baltic University Programme is about people. It is thanks to them that the Programme has been running for so many years and continues to be a great example of international university co-operation. For me individually, the BUP is extremely important because it has contributed to my personal and career development. Thanks to the honour of being elected by the participants of the student conference as Student Representative, a new stage in my life had begun, so I had a chance to challenge myself. Over the next two years, I had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people from different countries (some of whom I still keep in touch with today), experience many new things and places, spend hours in discussions, presentations on sustainability and the Programme itself. I always have fond memories of The Baltic University Programme and I know that without participation in my first event, I would not be where I am today - being part of a leading Swedish company - supporting the sustainability agenda.



Some of the participants at the BUP student conference in Ukraine in 2017.

Photo: Sylwester Nagórka



The BUP representants at the ReGeneration 2030 Summit, Mariehamn, Åland in 2018.

Photo: Sylwester Nagórka

# BUP activities – learning & co-operation

Sinikka Suomalainen, MSc, Åbo Akademi University, Finland, Planning Officer at the Associated Secretariat and Finnish National BUP Centre in Finland, engaged in the BUP since 1991



The Baltic University Programme (BUP) started at about the same time as I started working at what is nowadays called The Centre for Lifelong Learning at Åbo Akademi University. When the BUP was initiated Åbo Akademi University was active in the foundation process and the BUP Finnish National Centre was established at Åbo Akademi University in Turku. The centre is now, since several years back, a BUP Associated Secretariat. Luckily for me, I became involved in the BUP activities from the very beginning. The first BUP course was the *Baltic Sea Environment* arranged in the autumn semester of 1991. The course gathered many interested participants. The lectures were delivered by satellite TV, a new technology for us. Further on the arrangements of the Space Bridges were exciting experiences.

The BUP has undertaken many kinds of activities ever since the beginning. Maybe the most amazing activity is SAIL, Sustainability Applied in International Learning. The concept consists of seminars and courses arranged on a tall ship with participants from all BUP countries while cruising the Baltic Sea. SAIL started as course for students but later came to also include a course for university teachers. Åbo Akademi University arranged several Teachers SAILS on the Polish Tall Ship STS Fryderyk Chopin sailing on the Baltic Sea and a couple of times even further to the North Sea and Biscay. Many teachers have participated in these one-week sailings with seminars and presentations on different sustainability aspects. These have been excellent possibilities for international co-operation on board, getting know colleagues from the Baltic Sea Region, and their research.

I have had the great fortune to meet many wonderfully dedicated teachers and PhD students from the BUP countries, especially on the Teachers' Education for Sustainable Development courses. In the beginning we met for a few days, often in Rogów in Poland, for an annual Education for Sustainable Development Teachers' Conference. These meetings were organised together with the BUP National Centre in Poland, at Lodz University of Technology with Åbo Akademi University as the main organizer.

In another take on the Teachers' Education for Sustainable Development course, we met at workshops in different countries in the Baltic Sea Region. Between the workshops, we kept in contact via e-learning as a part of the course. A more comprehensive course was suggested by some of the participating BUP teachers. For this extended 6-month Education for Sustainable Development course e-learning, peer learning, and a change project were developed.

In addition to the teacher training, the Finnish BUP Centre has arranged student conferences in connection to the Annual meetings of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in Turku.

It has been a great pleasure organizing conferences and workshops abroad in co-operation with local people you can fully trust, the national centres, the BUP family.

I am very happy that I have been able to take part in the arranging of possibilities to support co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region and for the possibility for university teachers, researchers, and students to get to know each other. Personally, I am extremely happy that I have had the possibility to get to know the region and, not least, the contacts with many interesting and lovely people.



BUP teachers cooperating on the yards of the tall ship STS Fryderyk Chopin at the Teachers SAIL 2015.

Photo: Sinikka Suomalainen

# My first BUP journey

Christian Andersson, PhD, previously active at Uppsala University, Sweden, former Web Master at the BUP Coordinating Secretariat, engaged in the BUP since 1994



It was September 1994 and I had just started working at the BUP when it was decided that I would go on a journey to the Baltic States and Russia to get a feel for the region. Another goal was to gather knowledge about datasets kept at the universities I was going to visit, datasets that could be used in Geographic Information System applications.

The itinerary was to go from Uppsala to Tallinn by boat and then on to Tartu for my first stop. The idea then was to continue to Riga, Kaunas, Vilnius, St Petersburg and Petrozavodsk by bus and train. However, already in the morning of the day of my departure the big news was that the ship Estonia had gone down during the night and a big search and rescue operation was going on but only a small number of people had been found alive. My booking on the Estonia was hastily changed so that I instead could fly to Tallinn later the same day. From the plane one could see the still ongoing rescue operation. In the evening of a chaotic day and to the surprise of my hosts at Tartu University I arrived one day earlier than expected. They somehow managed to solve the problem and I had a few days in Tartu and also made a short visit to Tallinn and Tallinn Technical University. The stay in Tartu was not my first visit in Tartu as I had been there a few years before on a botanical excursion. The big difference was of course that in the meantime Estonia had gained independence.

After a few days and a lot of coffee in Tartu I continued by bus to Riga. In Riga I was welcomed by the BUP contact at the University of Latvia. I spent some time at the Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences and also made a visit to a research department in Jurmala. One evening, just by chance, I met a delegation from a Swedish company. They were shopping for small

mechanical businesses. But they were not the only ones, there was also a Danish company interested in Latvian pharmaceutical companies.

Next stop after a bus ride was Kaunas. At the bus station I was very nicely welcomed by the BUP representative Linas Kliucininkas. He had also organised a program for me with visits to many interesting departments of the university. In one place we came to talk about Lithuania's newly gained independence, ĳcininkas, and the possibility for Lithuania to join the EU and one of the professors said that "We have just left one union and we will never join another". The hotel where I was staying had an interesting mix of clients. When I first checked in another guy waiting to check in heard me speak English. First, he asked me if I could help him to check in and he continued to tell that he was an American and this was his first visit to Lithuania and indeed Europe. So I asked him why he had chosen to go to Lithuania. He answered that he had come to pick-up his new wife that he had found on some kind of mail order. Let's hope he found her and that they now live happily in the US. When I had dinner in the restaurant there were only a few guests. One of them was a man in horrible jacket. He finished his meal about the same time I got mine. After some hesitation he came over and asked me in German he if he could join for a chat. My German is very poor and his English was not much better. Anyway, it was revealed that he was sent out by a German company to sell used cars from western Germany to the Baltic countries. He, himself, came from the former East Germany and to my surprise from a town called Quedlinburg. I knew this place as I had been there the year before on another botanical excursion to the Harz Gebirge.

From Lithuania the journey went on to St Petersburg by night train. It was already the latter half of October and rather cold. St Petersburg is a big city and the BUP representative Victor Ionov had organised some meetings for me in different parts of the city. The best way to get around was of course by subway. However, this was a crash course in the Cyrillic alphabet as station names were written Cyrillic only.



In Tartu I visited not only Tartu University but also made a short visit to this building which was the Regio office.

Photo: Christian Andersson

Next and final BUP stop was Petrozavodsk. Once again by Russian night train. In Petrozavodsk the first snow had come and it was very cold but I got a warm welcome. During a couple of nice and intensive days I met many interesting scientists and PhD students.

For me to get home the people in Petrozavodsk helped me find a railway ticket to Sortavala from where it was possible to go by bus to Joensuu in Finland. They also arranged a meeting for me with local nature conservancy. The train to Sortavala arrived in the morning, the departure for bus to Joensuu was in the afternoon. So, I had agreed to meet the nature conservancy in the middle of the day. The guy turned up with a big old jeep like vehicle. He did not speak much English but asked me to jump in. Then he took me for a ride into the forest and up a mountain. Near the top he stopped, went out and we looked at the view of Sortavala and Lake Ladoga. Back in town I found a hotel where they kindly let me rest a little while waiting for the bus. The bus came and left on schedule. It did not take long until it came to the border. Here all passengers had to leave the bus and go through the passport control. Suddenly, as I was standing there in line with my passport in hand, the woman next to me addressed me in Swedish. She had of course noticed my passport but when I looked at her passport it was Russian red and with Cyrillic letters. Later she told that she had studied Swedish at the university in St Petersburg. It was dark when I arrived in Joensuu but there was still a couple of hours before the train to Helsinki so I found a place where I could get something to eat. When I was about to leave a big crowd entered, some of them wearing traditional Karelian clothes. One of them saw that I was about to leave and told me that I would probably rather want to stay and enjoy the Karelian karaoke night that soon would start. Unfortunately, I had to leave to catch the train.

In Helsinki I was met by my friends Harry and Heljä and my girlfriend who had travelled all the way from Uppsala to meet me.

In conclusion, I learned very little about Geographic Information System datasets at the universities I visited so that goal was hardly met. On the other hand, I really got a hands-on experience of the region and developed



The Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood on the Griboedov Canal in central St. Petersburg.

Photo: Christian Andersson

a strong desire to learn more. The year 1994 was also at or near the bottom of the recession in Russia and the Baltic States after the dissolution of the Soviet Union so in that sense the journey also was baseline study for all the later developments.



The pedestrian street Laisves Aleja in Kaunas is a long (and straight) boulevard.

Photo: Christian Andersson



The railway station in Sortavala was the final stop. After a meeting with the local nature conservancy I went by bus to Finland and then home.

Photo: Christian Andersson

# The BUP Universe

Maria Stronska, MA, Chernihiv National University of Technology and University of Applied Sciences Joanneum, Ukraine, former Student Representative 2016 - 2017, engaged in the BUP since 2016

Entering the BUP Universe was one of the best things that happened to me during my university years. Within the Programme there are not only different exciting planets participating in the actions for our common future, but as well many galaxies which you may navigate between based on your interests. My journey started back in 2016 and it was mind-blowing. BUP is about learning something new, sharing experiences and working together toward a better sustainable future that we create and along the way re-discover our own self and grow as people. Like when you finally fought all of your fears and climbed to the top of the 37-meter-high main sky yard of the tall ship Fryderyk Chopin, and feel the ship swing and consume the greatness of the ocean. This happened during one of my toughest and greatest challenges - BUP student SAIL. My life would never be the same afterwards and I'm happy for each and every one of the people that helped me become a better version of myself. One of the best gifts I have received from the BUP is meeting amazing, inspiring and open-minded people, who are still a part of my life. Thank you to the BUP, for all the adventures, it's highly appreciated!



A photo taken at the BUP student conference 2016, held in Ratnieki, Latvia. Pictured are, from the left, Maria, Tatiana Klisho, Saint Petersburg University and Alexandra Kaygorodova, Saint Petersburg State University. At this conference, during the Students' Parliament, Maria's candidacy was approved by the students and she was elected as a Student Representative.

Photo: Maria Stronska



This photo was taken in La Coruña right before Maria set sails along the Atlantic Ocean for two weeks together with 30 brave participants from universities in Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and Ukraine. The event was SAIL for Students in 2016, Cruise and course: Sustainability Applied in International Learning. Pictured is the Polish tall ship Fryderyk Chopin which the students sailed from La Coruna, Spain to Blyth, United Kingdom.

Photo: Maria Stronska

## Learn and then teach more

Elena Korshuk, Associate Professor, Belarusian State University, Belarus, engaged in the BUP since 2000



In december 2000 I boarded the overnight train to go back home to Minsk from a conference in Moscow. My only desire was to have a quiet night's sleep. So, seeing a man in my compartment was not exactly good news, as communication was the last thing on my list of priorities. Then I saw a little booklet with the title "Ecology for primary school" or something like that. Ok, I thought to myself, a teacher. Well, it turned out to be Siarhei Darozhka, the BUP Centre Director in Belarus. We ended up discussing how to create an "English for Environmental studies" textbook and other projects all the way back to Minsk. Honestly, afterwards I had forgotten all about it. Then he invited me to a conference on that very English book in Vitebsk. There I first worked, unexpectedly, with Paul Westlake, assuring that his intercultural communication training went well. And this overnight discussion train trip has led to many years and many projects that have given me a feeling of professional and personal development as well as pride and satisfaction. The most meaningful discoveries I made were both intellectual, in the way of what I have learnt, and organizational, it was quite unusual to be in the same conference with people with so many different professional backgrounds, it was cross-cultural. I had never before been thanked in public for what I had done (even if it was work I was paid to do), I had never before had opportunities to do my professional work with full technical and financial support. And, of course, being chosen as the Educator of the Year in 2005 was really unexpected. I have never felt such appreciation back home.

The BUP is a great way for me to learn and then teach more about various cultures and how to better communicate with each other. It is a true

professional and personal pleasure to see how yesterday's BUP kids turn into BUP teachers. It is cool to see how students who took part in the BUP events change, how they become responsible citizens. And needless to say, that the amazing people I meet through BUP make life so much better! I will mention no names here - the BUP is a family, where every member is precious. So many fun and educative stories are connected with the BUP. I remember Maria Hejna (then Winkler) giving the presenters fly-catchers as a sign of appreciation for their input into the conference. I felt that it was so weird. But! Later I have learnt the value of those Alessi design utensils. This is a lesson I keep teaching my students about. Always explain the value a present has for your culture. To anyone who considers joining the BUP family I would say they must grab this unique opportunity to develop themselves as human beings as well as professionally.



Elena at the 2008 BUP student conference in Rogów, Poland.

Photo: BUP archive

# An experience for life

Carina Gräsbeck, MPolsc, Åbo Akademi University, Finland, Planning Officer at the Centre for lifelong learning at Åbo Akademi University, engaged in the BUP since 1991



I have a lot of fond memories from the time when I was involved in The Baltic University Programme in the beginning of 1990. A colleague of mine, asked me and another young student to participate in the film about Finland that was to be a part of the course *Peoples of the Baltic*. “My name is Carina and I will be your guide in this tour about Finland” was my first sentence in the video. The reason I still remember it was because I had to repeat it several times until I could say it without problems. The tour in Finland lead us to sleeping in barns in the east of Finland, jumping into lakes, seeing the magnificent water falls in Imatra, picking berries in the woods, enjoying the Art Festival in Turku and many many more wonderful adventures. Later on, we got the opportunity to take part in the organising of several conferences; one that took place in St Petersburg soon after the perestroika and glasnost. We were interviewing people in the streets about their thoughts about human rights and also visiting schools. Maybe these videos still exist somewhere. I ended up meeting two wonderful girls from Baku whom I exchanged letters with for many years after. Several friendships have lasted until this day. And as the cherry on the cake, I sort of met my husband as he was filming me when I talked about the Art festival in Turku. Neither of us knew then, that we would later get married and have a daughter together.



The film crew waiting for the right moment to capture the waterfall in Imatra.

Photo: Carina Gräsbeck



Björn Grönholm and Kenneth Sjölund (Carina's future husband) looking at the manuscript for filming in Turku.

Photo: Carina Gräsbeck

# BUP helped to widen my perspectives

Hasitha Priyashantha, PhD, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Sweden, engaged in the BUP since 2019

As a PhD student, there are various opportunities to participate in workshops and networking events during the doctoral education. Such a unique experience is participating in the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary training known as the BUP PhD Students Training organized by The Baltic University Programme's National Centre in Poland and BUP's Associated Secretariat at the Lodz University of Technology.

I participated in the BUP PhD Students Training in Rogów, Poland during 24-28 November 2019. It was a unique training workshop where I got to meet fellow PhD students from several BUP participating universities. We were a group representing diverse academic and cultural backgrounds and therefore the overall experience of the training was life-enriching. Usually, when we are on a conference or networking session, it is common to meet colleagues sharing the same subjects and disciplines. However, at the BUP PhD Students Training, we got to meet colleagues who work in different subject areas of expertise from our own. This enabled me to widen my perspectives and get an overview of work in other disciplines to benchmark my own work. This is one of the major reasons, that I got a particular interest in participating in this interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary training. Apart from this, we got a chance to meet experts from BUP participating universities, who contributed during fruitful discussions about PhD projects and provided valuable inputs and insights during face-to-face meetings. In addition to the educational- and training sessions, we had many social- and networking opportunities during the program. Also, the food was great, I had so much fun when tasting traditional and local Polish dishes. I highly recommend other fellow PhD students to take part in these kinds of trainings



to broaden their horizons and expand the comfort zone from our specific discipline to multidiscipline.



Participating in the BUP PhD Students Training enabled me to interact with fellow PhD students and share insights from diverse projects. This also helped me to gain an understanding of how life as a PhD student differs between participating universities, and sharing experiences among new acquaintances gave me much new useful knowledge.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski



It gave me immense pleasure and satisfaction to successfully complete the BUP PhD Students Training and to be able to use my experiences and the advice and insights gained from the training in my PhD project and future career.

Photo: Krzysztof Ciesielski

## Potential in co-operation

Björn Grönholm, MSc, previously active at Åbo Akademi University, Finland, former Student Representative 1991 - 1993, Head of Secretariat at the Union on the Baltic Cities, engaged in the BUP since 1991



My engagement with The Baltic University Programme go back to the very beginning. I was asked by Paula Lindroos and Rector Bengt Stenlund to participate as a Student Representative in planning BUP activities. At that time, I was a board member of the student union at Åbo Akademi University with the responsibility to lift up environmental topics and coordinate information for the students at the university. I was involved in planning the first BUP courses, events and coordinating visits. In particularly one of the first BUP broadcasted sessions from Turku was a moment I will always remember. All the people from different countries, new technology and creating something new after the end of the cold war was fantastic. These experiences made me grow, find the Baltic Sea Region with all the cultures and all the richness we have in our region. It opened my eyes for the potential in co-operation on an international level and helped shaped who I am today as a person, both in my private and professional life.

Throughout the years my engagement, even though smaller, has been in different BUP courses and it has been nice to see that the concept is still vital and working. From my work position, I have been able to add some new elements and content to the BUP curricula of which I am proud. The BUP is a success story like the Union of the Baltic Cities network for which I have worked for 16 years. Both BUP and the Union of the Baltic Cities network were established during a challenging time when the pressure on our countries and societies was huge. The uncertainty of the future was evident but the spirit among a big number of people with a strong interest and will to build something new together was a powerful force that opened a path for how we live, work and cooperate today.

This phase in the history and these initiatives works as a perfect model for international cross-border co-operation and should be utilized more globally. There is much to learn from these cooperation's, courses and all the people. I have been a part of this and feel lucky, I am definitely born under happy stars!



Parts of the audience at the broadcast session Baltic Sea Environment 5: Too Dangerous – Industrial pollution and emissions, held in Turku, Finland in 1992.

Photo: Print screen from the BUP Youtube-channel

## A unique regional scientific platform

Farid Karimi, PhD, Novia University of Applied Sciences, Finland, scientific coordinator of the BUP theme Energy System and supervisor at the BUP Master Thesis Training, engaged in the BUP since 2019



The Baltic Sea Region is geopolitically crucial for the EU for various reasons. Having a scientific network such as The Baltic University Programme (BUP) that connects academic communities and students in the region to work on the same goal, to develop scientific scholarships and education, is rewarding and fruitful. This network makes a level playing field for all countries of the region to further academically thrive and develop, not least for the post-Soviet countries of the region with the economic and social challenges inherited from the past. Furthermore, BUP activities, for which BUP usually cover the participation costs, contribute to reanimating civil societies and enhancing democracies in the region, not least in challenging times.

I have had the pleasure to collaborate with BUP on various occasions and in different capacities, not least as the scientific coordinator of the Energy System research theme and as a supervisor at the BUP Master Thesis Training. The research themes facilitate networking between researchers, not least for forming research consortia. The training aims to improve the quality of students' master theses in the region. For a master thesis, the quality pertains to the research design, the style of writing, the structure of the thesis, and scientifically presented results.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the BUP Symposiums provide a valuable platform for young or early career researchers to present their research results and network with fellow researchers in the region.

## Concluding message from the chairman of the BUP International Board



Being chairman of The Baltic University Programmes International Board is an honourable mission. The whole idea of The Baltic University Programme is based on the belief that exchanges and meetings between people are a prerequisite for being able to create a better world. The BUP is a network that - despite all the challenges our world faces - is filled with ambition and faith in the future.

The Programmes objectives and activities are more important today than ever. We live in a time marked by war, climate threats and polarization. To address these challenges, we must collaborate across national and academic boundaries. In order to achieve sustainable development, we must both create and spread knowledge. We must be stubborn and courageous.

The Baltic University Programme creates the conditions for dialogue and exchange between students, teachers and researchers from a large number of universities in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region. It gives me hope and it is my conviction that The Baltic University Programme will continue to be a strong contributing force for positive and sustainable development.

Kind regards,  
Olle Jansson,  
*Chairman of the BUP International Board*

# *Celebration of three decades*

In 2021, The Baltic University Programme celebrated its 30-year anniversary. This book presents how it once started and how the Programme has developed during the years. You will also find contributions from colleagues that share their memories and stories from these first three decades. Let us aim for at least 30 more years of working together.

