



PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Dear Colleagues,

The first year of this three-year life cycle of BSRUN started normally. We had the first meeting of the newly-appointed Steering Committee in Riga on 5 February and on 19-20 February I had the pleasure of attending the 80th anniversary celebrations of the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno. Also, the University of Turku celebrated its 100th anniversary normally on 28 February. On the flight to Minsk I had to fill in a form which was for me the first concrete indication of the new normal to follow soon.

Then, the secretariat face to face meetings and visits in March were cancelled and the University Governance event planned for Riga in May and our 20th anniversary events planned for Turku in early June were postponed. Luckily, we decided not to try and organise the anniversary event this autumn, but moved it till next June, since had we not done so, another postponement would have been in our hands now. Next June will also give us a very good opportunity to discuss other recent developments in the region and the importance of cooperation versus confrontation. The mission of BSRUN remains the same.

Universities and lighthouses are very resilient institutions. They have survived many natural and man-made catastrophes. They also enlighten their environments. This is why we in 2000 decided to have Bengtskär lighthouse in the logo of BSRUN and still want to offer you the opportunity to see the unique place itself with

your own eyes. The summer season is the only opportunity to get there (and back) comfortably. The lighthouse was built in 1906, so it will be celebrating its 115th anniversary next year.

In this issue of the Bulletin we want to give you examples of how innovatively and flexibly our members have tackled the new normal under the coronavirus pandemic. I do hope you find this interesting reading. The two forthcoming online events will give us practical examples of our own.

We are at the moment discussing between the secretariats new ways of getting current information about our members to all the membership. We will be coming back to this in the near future. In this issue, we have included the outcomes of the rector's elections at all our Polish member institutions, the positions of our members in three global university rankings, some anniversary information and a short description of the St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University (LETI) who joined us in March.

Our Belarusian members have made an active and important contribution to BSRUN and on our part we have been happy to locate our events and joint projects there. Further cooperation is even more important in the current challenging circumstances. I do hope our members support further joint efforts to the common good and for the best of the region.

Finally, let me wish you all the best under current challenging circumstances, natural or man-made, since together we are stronger. Please take care of yourselves and those near and dear to you.

*Yours sincerely,
Kari Hyppönen*



Postponed BSRUN events in 2020



The Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) was founded in 2000, and the year 2020 was marked with the celebration of its 20th anniversary. It was planned to be organised back to back with the Baltic Sea Science Day of the Council of the Baltic Sea States in University of Turku, which is also celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2020. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances, these events and festivities had to be postponed, and the Steering Committee decided to move the events to **2-3 June**

2021. The programme will then include a visit to the lighthouse, as originally planned.

We are still planning to organise an event in Riga on University Governance and new university boards/councils which were recently introduced in Poland where rectors' elections this spring/summer were organised for the first time on the basis of the new legislation. The intention is to look at experiences also from countries where similar changes in legislation were introduced earlier.

Rectors' elections in Polish universities

According to Polish legislation, state universities' rectors are elected for four years term, and a person may not be elected to serve as rector for more than two consecutive terms. In 2020 the term of office of current rectors ended. New rectors' elections took place in spring and summer time in accordance with Polish Law on Higher Education and Science underpinning the reform known as the Constitution for Science, which entered into force on 1 October 2018 and represents a change of the attitude to education, conducting research and university governance. The rectors' elections for the 2020-2024 term ended for Polish member universities of BSRUN with the following results.



The newly appointed Rector of the **University of Lodz** is Prof. dr hab. Elżbieta Żądzińska. During 25 years of work at UL, she has completed all stages of scientific career from scientific and technical worker to full professor. She is the chairman of the Science Committee of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (KRASP). In 2005-2008, she was Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Biology and Environmental Protection. From 2008 to 2016, she was Dean of this Faculty, in 2016-2020 term she was Vice-Rector for Science. Her main research areas are: biology of modern and historical human populations, determinants of population stress.



The new Rector of the **University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn** is Prof. dr hab. Jerzy Przyborowski. In 2014, he assumed the position of Vice-Rector for Education Development and Student Affairs – first deputy of the Rector. He is Head of the Inter-Departmental Plant Biotechnology Workshop at the Faculty of Environmental Management and Agriculture. He conducts research in crop biotechnology and plant breeding. He is the author of 51 publications, co-author of one book, two lecture scripts, one utility models, one nucleotide sequence in the NCBI GenBank. He is a member of several scientific unions and associations and has a number of awards and distinctions.



The new Rector of the **University of Warsaw** is Prof. Alojzy Z. Nowak. He is affiliated to UW as of 1984. He has held a variety of leadership roles including Head of the Academic Subunit for International Economics and the Academic Unit for Economics at the Faculty of Management, Director of European Centre. In 1999-2006, Prof. Nowak was Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Management, and Dean of this unit in 2006-2012. Next four years, he spent at UW working as Vice-Rector in charge of research and cooperation. In 2016, he was elected as Dean of the Faculty of Management. During his academic career, he has delivered lectures at universities in France, UK, USA, Russia, China and Korea.

We are proud that Prof. Nowak served as Vice-President and Head of the EU Secretariat of BSRUN in 2017-2019 and we enjoyed numerous events held by University under his command.



Rector Krzysztof Wilde
Gdansk University of Technology



Rector Marcin Gruchała
Medical University of Gdansk



Rector Robert Ciborowski
University of Białystok

The Rectors Prof. dr hab. Krzysztof Wilde, Prof. dr hab. Marcin Gruchała, Prof. dr hab. Robert Ciborowski were re-elected.

Congratulations and warm wishes to all Rectors!

A big three: new edition of the most prestigious global university rankings

QS World University Rankings 2021



A new edition of Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings was published on 10 June 2020. It is the world's most popular and referenced source of information about universities. The main assessment criteria are: international student and teaching mobility, the number of international scholarship programmes, the level of scientific research, contribution to innovation, citation of scientific articles, the level of educational services, surveys results of about a million independent academic experts and employers. This year the ranking was launched at a challenging time caused by COVID-19 impacting universities and students

alike. The current version revealed top 1000 universities covering 80 locations.

With its position of 225th university in the ranking, **Saint Petersburg State University**, represented with 28 other Russian higher educational institutions, moved up by nine positions and became the second best university in Russia. It has significantly improved its status in Academic Reputation Ratio and International Students Ratio. The **University of Turku** was placed 287th as in the previous year and became the third best university in Finland. **Belarusian State University** ranks 317th. It has improved its performance by 34 positions compared to the previous year. This is the best result in the entire history of participation in this ranking, which brings BSU closer to the prestigious 1% of the best universities in the world. The **University**

of Warsaw was ranked 321st – this is 28 positions higher than last year. It became 141st in Europe and the first in the country. The reputation of the university and employers' opinion were the highest-assessed. **Riga Technical University** was ranked in 701-750 range, and this is the highest score among three Latvian universities included in the ranking. RTU received the highest appraisal for the increase of foreign students. **Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University**, for the first time, entered the published part of the ranking taking position in 701-750 range and showing the best result in Faculty Student Ratio. The **University of Latvia**, same as last year, remained in 801-1000 range. **Gdansk University of Technology** and the **University of Lodz** also took place in the range of 801-1000 and achieved the best results in Faculty Student Ratio and international exchange accordingly. The **Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration** represented by the **North-West Institute of Management** in Saint Petersburg also entered the list of the best universities in the world for the first time and was ranked in 801-1000 range.

THE World University Rankings 2021



The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021 include more than 1500 universities across 93 countries and regions, making them the largest and most diverse university rankings to date. The table is based on 13 carefully calibrated performance indicators that measure

an institution's performance across four areas: teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook. This year's ranking analysed more than 80 million citations across over 13 million research publications and included survey responses from 22000 scholars globally. It reflected the status before the pandemic – experts will assess the consequences of COVID-19 in the future. The new edition was published on 2 September 2020.

The **University of Turku**, same as last year, was placed in 351-400 range with the best result in Citation Ratio. The **University of Latvia** ranks 601-800 in the world and the first among Latvian higher education institutions. It is also one of the two best rated in the Baltics. **Saint Petersburg State University** has retained its position in the group 601-800. It ranks 13th among 48 Russian universities. The **University of Warsaw** ranks 801-1000 with the best performance in International Outlook. **Riga Technical University** has retained its place in 1000+ university group, but has been recognised as the 284th best university in the world in terms of university cooperation with industry. **Belarusian State University** is the only Belarusian university that is consistently included in THE ranking. It is represented in 1001+ group. **Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University** kept its place in 1001+ group. The university achieved the greatest success in relation to the proportion of foreign students. **Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University** entered the list for the first time and took a place in 1000+ range, showing the best achievements in university integration into the international scientific and creative process. The **Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration** represented by the **North-West Institute of Management** in St. Petersburg was also included in the ranking for the first time and was ranked 1000+.



The Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai Ranking) is released by ShanghaiRanking Consultancy. It has been recognised as the precursor of global university rankings and the most trustworthy one. ARWU uses six objective indicators to rank world universities, including the number of alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, number of highly cited researchers selected by Clarivate Analytics, number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science, number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index – Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index, and universities’ per

capita performance. More than 2000 universities are ranked by ARWU every year. This year, the best 1000 universities in the world are published in the latest edition from 15 August 2020.

The **University of Warsaw** was listed between 301 and 400 – it is the highest position among eight ranked Polish universities. The **University of Turku** was also ranked among the top 301-400 universities – its position remained the same as in the previous year. It became the second best university in Finland. **Saint Petersburg State University** was included again in the group 301-400 and became the second best university in Russia. It was the only Russian institution to receive the HiCi score – highly cited researchers. The **Gdansk University of Technology** was included in the ranking for the first time and fell into the range of 801-900 ahead of two other Polish universities. GUT received the highest score for the PCP index – per capita performance – the weighted score of the remaining five indicators divided by number of full-time university researchers.

COVID-19 and educational system: BSRUN members’ experience



Just like many other universities worldwide, the University of Lodz has opted for blended teaching to carry on in the time of pandemic. Authorities and administrative personnel assist and support academics and students in the transition from traditional to distance education. Despite the sanitary regime and other previously unknown hardships, everyone remains flexible and cooperative. The morale is good and the general spirit is one of understanding and encouragement. Paradoxically, social distancing has in some cases resulted in closer links between people, as it is only together that we can overcome these turbulent times.

University of Lodz, Poland

In February 2020, we quickly set up a specific task force – COVID-19 team, responsible for managing the virus-related measures in a coordinated and effective manner. Research facilities related to critical research and development remained open during the lock-down. Academic Library customer service, information retrieval, guidance and other services were available remotely. Teaching was continued online. Instruction and examinations requiring attendance on campus were offered only exceptionally with special arrangements in groups smaller than ten students. Sudden shift to online work was naturally a major change in the work community. E-mails from the rector and management were sent to the community. The purpose of these personal messages was to encourage, support and strengthen the spirit of togetherness. The pandemic situation has also brought along new research and development, for example, we participated in the development of new products demanded by COVID-19.



LAB University of Applied Sciences, Finland



Every cloud has a silver lining. The pandemic gave Novgorod State University and its partner universities an innovative opportunity for cooperation through virtual academic mobility. As an example of this opportunity, NovSU, Appalachian State University (NC, U.S.A.) and University of Free State (RSA) decided to design and co-teach a joint graduate certificate programme “Leader of International Virtual Team”, making use of digital learning and collaboration technologies. According to students’ – digital natives – feedback, online learning turned out to be a more comfortable environment for them and allowed to overcome limitations of self-isolation.

Yaroslav-The-Wise Novgorod State University, Russia

We immediately incorporated the home office working standards for administration staff and online teaching methods for students. COVID-19 university website in Polish and English was established, where we uploaded important scientific information, links, FAQ and contact information for a helpline. “Good practices with MUG” was the name of our three-month long social media campaign that included safety guidelines for all members of MUG community. The most important initiative in the fight against the pandemic, led by MUG, was the creation of COVID-19 test centres, with the help of University Clinical Centre and local authorities of the voivodeship. Three outdoor centres were established: two drive-thru and one in a walk-thru form in Gdansk and Gdynia. Our COVID-19 test centres were all supported by volunteer students, who were on duty collecting swabs and registering patients. For the second half of the year we are still supporting our COVID-19 test centres, comply with the sanitary safety guidelines, and for the new academic year we are implementing hybrid system teaching.



Medical University of Gdansk, Poland



At the University of Turku, the coronavirus situation in the spring required us to take a digital leap at a tight schedule, in which the University succeeded extremely well. For example, teaching was organised mainly with remote connections, dissertation defences were streamed, and meetings were held diversely on different kinds of virtual meeting platforms. In this new situation, leadership and management as well as trust within work communities are highlighted. Our goal has been that, even though the work mediums and communications channels have somewhat changed, the University's operation is kept as normal as possible.

University of Turku, Finland

Since the middle of March, the University has shifted to online learning and teaching. SPbU has opened access to its online courses on Open Education and Coursera platforms. All SPbU students (including international exchange students) can get a free access to SPbU online courses and receive the certificates upon their completion. Since the start of a new academic year 2020/21 classes are taught in blended format with most lectures being streamed online (the university acquired a subscription for MS Teams). With regard to the international students who have not been able to arrive in Russia due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, they have been provided with the possibility to join the programmes online. We have also launched a Telegram Channel for international students where we publish the answers to most frequently asked questions. SPbU has also launched a separate web-page where we publish the latest updates related to the measures undertaken by the University to combat the spread of the infection.



Saint Petersburg State University, Russia



Due to the spread of COVID-19 and consequently introduced restrictions, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University as most of the educational institutions around the globe had to swiftly adjust to the new reality and introduce relevant initiatives, two of which – the International Summer at IKBFU and the University Employment Programme should be highlighted as the most successful ones. The former was developed as a set of cultural and leisure activities specifically for the international students who had to stay in Kaliningrad for the summer holidays due to the travel restrictions. The Russian Language Club was also organised for the period of summer holidays, there students could deepen their knowledge of the Russian language and culture as well as make new friends. Through the University Employment Programme, on the other hand, 200 job positions were created to support those students who found themselves in straits because of the influence of the spread of COVID-19 on the global economy by giving them an opportunity to work at the University in summer. Both initiatives attracted more than 300 students and received highly positive feedback from the participants.

Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Russia

HWR Berlin intensified the use of (regular) virtual meetings during the pandemic. Thereby, the communication within the university and departments increased as colleagues were more available than before (no business travels). Furthermore, the international office set up virtual meetings with partner universities taking the cooperation to the next level. It enabled a lot of colleagues on both sides to take part in meetings that could not have been realised through travels. All in all, overcoming the exceptional challenges during the pandemic crisis turned out to be of great value in terms of solving problems, creating new projects, building trust – and the joy of seeing each other at least virtually.



Berlin School of Economics and Law, Germany



It should be noted that the University made the transition to e-learning within one week. The outgoing academic year has shown how quickly we can change and learn. Undoubtedly, after the pandemic, the education will transform with due regard for the giant digital leap that it received during this period. Our goal is to take the best, to highlight the strengths, but at the same time we should understand for the future that online format of education should not become dominant. A student, coming to a university, receives not only knowledge and skills, but also the energy of live communication. The student dives into the corporate culture of the university, its values, youth team, student life. All this cannot be obtained remotely, and new combined approaches have to be developed.

Saint Petersburg State University of Economics, Russia

In the spring, due to the impact of pandemics, we quickly adapted our infrastructure to studies on remote collaborative video platforms. In order not to lose opportunities to work in laboratories and to allow teachers to adequately check students' knowledge, we were forced to extend the spring semester and start the next year of study two weeks later than usual. We are currently working in hybrid mode, courses to be visited by a larger number of students are still remote. We now pay great attention to the overall digital transformation of the university and the ability to provide high-quality engineering studies also remotely. At the same time, we strongly respect epidemiological security measures to reduce the risk of infection for our students and employees.



Riga Technical University, Latvia



Considering the current epidemic situation and the possibility of dynamic changes in the upcoming months, in the winter semester of the academic year 2020/2021, the classes at University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn were conducted in remote and mixed-mode. Lectures, seminars, proseminars and all those classes that do not require face-to-face meetings, the use of laboratories, teaching aids, measuring or experimental equipment and devices, or being present in medical, therapeutic or educational institutions, etc., were carried out entirely in a remote manner. Other classes were conducted in a mixed-mode (theoretical parts online and practical parts at the University or the relevant institution). These classes were combined in blocks and carried out on a rotational basis over the shortest possible period.

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

On-line learning system for teaching and learning via TEAMS was used during lockdown at the University of Latvia within the spring semester 2019/2020. Academic year 2020/2021 has started with face-to-face learning and teaching with possibility to switch to on-line system whenever is decided.

University of Latvia, Latvia



Anniversaries in 2020



Several BSRUN members celebrate their anniversaries in 2020. In spite of the challenging circumstances caused by the pandemic, some of them have already held certain festivities and events in online and offline format, the others are still preparing for the celebration. Congratulations to the universities and best wishes of prosperity and success!

University of Turku – 100th anniversary

Francisk Skorina Gomel State University – 90th anniversary

Saint Petersburg State University of Economics – 90th anniversary

Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno – 80th anniversary

Medical University of Gdansk – 75th anniversary

University of Lodz – 75th anniversary

Announcement

Forthcoming BSRUN events

International Online Seminar on University Governance and Leadership in COVID-19 times and beyond, 15 October 2020



The global academic community faced severe challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic in the spring semester of 2020. Campuses were closing one by one, studies were moved online, students called back from semester abroad studies. The decision-making process had to be very flexible and quick as situation was unclear and was changing every day. Universities in general were rather successful in escaping to e-World but pandemic caused a lot of questions to the strategies of universities' development:

- What is the proper balance of online teaching and MOOCs? How to teach lab classes in technical, medical and agricultural universities? How to run practical classes in veterinary or mining?
- What is the role of the campuses now? Do universities need dorms or physical libraries?
- Are Document Management System (DMS) and Financial Management System (FMS) working properly?
- How to run traditional eye-to-eye processes like hiring staff, enrollment, promotion, etc. totally online?

We are inviting you to the International Online Seminar “University Governance and Leadership in COVID-19 times and beyond” to discuss successful cases of our members in different countries and the first steps after the pandemic.

Detailed information about the event will be sent to members soon.

International Online Seminar on How to run Executive Education in COVID-19 times and beyond, 29 October 2020



The COVID-19 pandemic caused a lot of challenges for the global academic community. Universities in general were rather successful in moving education online. Executive Education is much more complicated issue as business people are much choosier – the biggest value of the studies is an interaction between students-executives and things that are freely discussed offline may cause disaster if leaks occur online. The COVID-19 sets challenges but also opens opportunities as Executive Education may be an option for many universities to survive.

We are inviting you to the International Online Seminar “How to run Executive Education in COVID-19 times and beyond” to discuss approaches of BSRUN members to launching, maintaining and developing of Business Education:

- How to start Business Studies (in case of existing offline programmes or from the scratch)
- Successful cases: market analysis, choice of the target audience, product focusing, etc.
- How to re-structure university to launch successful online Executive programme

Detailed information about the event will be sent to members soon.



St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University

Being the first Electrotechnical Institute established in Europe in 1886, ETU is well known in the fields of Radio Engineering and Telecommunications, Electronics, Electrical Engineering, Computer Sciences and Biomedical Engineering. Today ETU consists of seven schools: Radio Engineering and Telecommunications; Electronics; Computer Science and Technology; Electrical Engineering and Automatics; Information, Measurement, and Biotechnical Systems; Institute of Innovation Design and Technological Entrepreneurship; Humanities.



The University provides fast targeted spreading of new knowledge in the process of education. About 9300 students attend study programmes at ETU annually. More than 1700 of them come from abroad, representing nearly 80 countries. ETU offers about 100 major educational programmes and over 46 Ph.D. courses. What is more, ETU offers nine master programmes in English: Automation and Mechatronics; Computer Science and Knowledge Discovery; Efficient Electric Power Industry; Heritage Science; Laser Technologies; Renewable Solar Energy; RF, Microwave and Terahertz Engineering of Wireless Systems; Systems and Technologies in Digital Healthcare (in the field of Biomedical Engineering); Technology Innovation Management.

Over 50 research teams and state-of-the-art laboratories carry out breakthrough fundamental and applied research in Radio Electronics, Radio Physics, Information and Telecommunications Systems, Solid State Physics, Nanotechnology, Optoelectronics and Quantum Electronics, Vacuum and Plasma Technology, Microwave and Millimeter-wave Technology, Biomedical Engineering, etc.

The University's infrastructure includes the Centre for Microelectronics and Diagnostics. In the framework of the Federal Target Programme "The Russian Federation Nanoindustry Infrastructure Development", 2008-2010, the Centre for Science and Education "Nanotechnologies for Safety Systems" was established at ETU.

Since 2013 ETU has been the member of TOP-100 Russian Universities Project. As one of the winners of the contest, the University obtained additional government funding for implementation of the excellence programme.