



Visegrad University Association

General Meeting

Szent István University, Hungary, 19 September, 2016

1. Official Opening

The VUA General Meeting was opened by the VUA President Dr.h.c. prof. Ing. Peter Bielik, PhD., Rector of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. After prof. János Tószér, Rector of the Szent István University welcomed the participants, the President of the VUA expressed thanks to all members of the Association for enabling it to celebrate the 5th jubilee. He emphasized the involvement of individual members in fulfilling the objectives of the Association in the last year but he also presented the orientation at which the VUA members should direct in the future in terms of all fields of their cooperation activities.

2. VUA Annual Report 2016 and VUA Financial Report 2016

The VUA Annual Report 2016 was presented by Mgr. Vladislav Valach, VUA Secretary General, and consisted of the following parts:

- Overview of VUA activities for the period October 2015 to August 2016
- “Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development”
- “Science connecting nations” – 2nd VUA YOUTH Scientific Session
- The Agri-Food Value Chain: Challenges for Natural Resources Management and Society
VUA session: Studies on agri-food value chain in Visegrad and Eastern partnership
- VUA Summer School
- VUA supports IVF projects
- VUA YOUTH
- VUA Award of Excellence
- VUA Think Pool
- VUA 2015 General Meeting
- Promoting of VUA

"Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development"

In 2015 two issues of "***Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development***" were published. Issue vol. 4, 2015, (reported in VUA Annual Report 2015) no. 1 was released in April 2015 and vol. 4, 2015, no. 2 was released in October 2015. ***Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development*** is registered with De Gruyter Open Access in order to raise the awareness of the journal and increase its citation rate. To improve the quality of publishing we were offered from side of De Gruyter to use CrossCheck System – to ensure the content we publish is original and trustworthy. This system includes a database of scholarly content against which we can screen manuscripts, and software that does the screening. VUA submitted the application to Index Copernicus database. VJBSD was successfully evaluated. The evaluation of results was sent to VUA members on March 1, 2016.

"Science connecting nations" – 2nd VUA YOUTH Scientific session

On 25 November 2015, ***Visegrad University Association*** and the ***Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of Szent István University*** organized the 2nd international scientific conference for students in Godollo, Hungary. More than **125 students** presented their work in 10 Hungarian and 5 international sessions. In VUA YOUTH sessions, **47 international students submitted their research papers and participated with presentations from 19 countries** (not only VUA members): Slovakia, Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Montenegro, Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana, Serbia, India, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Laos, Burundi, Vietnam, China, Qatar. Nearly 100 participants attended the VUA YOUTH sessions and the total number of attendees was over 200.

The Agri-Food Value Chain: Challenges for Natural Resources Management and Society

The International Scientific Days 2016 Conference titled "***The Agri-Food Value: Challenges for Natural Resources Management and Society***" was organized at the ***Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra*** on ***May 19-20, 2016***. The Conference was organized by the Faculty of Economics and Management in cooperation with SUA, Visegrad University Association, Agricultural Experts Club and Slovak Agricultural Economists Association, EUNIS Slovakia and Junior Chamber International. The Conference was attended by more than **270 participants** from **23 countries** (Indonesia, Russian Federation, Poland, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Mongolia, USA, Hungary, Italy, Ukraine, India, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and others).

VUA Summer School

International Summer School organized by Visegrad University Association titled ***FOOD SCIENCE AND BUSINESS STUDIES: Traditions meet novelties*** was organized in the period of ***27.6.–9.7.2016*** by the ***Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra*** and ***Szent István University***,

Godollo. During the two weeks of the programme, the summer school participants had been offered high standard lectures provided by an international team of experts. The Visegrad Prize for the best presentation was awarded to Mr. Obozuwa Omokheka from Szent István University. There were **30 students** and **teachers** coming from **China, Poland, Russia, Uzbekistan, Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana, India, Iran, Ukraine, Hungary** and **Slovakia** that participated in this VUA Summer School.

VUA supports IVF projects

As proposed and approved by the VUA General Meeting 2015, VUA offers a support to IVF projects coordinated by VUA members in order to strengthen the connections of VUA members and the International Visegrad Fund.

The support includes: promotion and dissemination, publication activities (Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development), minimum financial support of 500€ (the support to be specified in order to meet the aims and objectives of VUA).

In 2015 there was no request to support an IVF project.

VUA YOUTH

VUA YOUTH is a sub-section of Visegrad University Association that is to help fulfil the objectives of the association. VUA YOUTH is open to all students of VUA member universities interested in contributing to the development of the association through active participation in common activities. In 2015 VUA YOUTH participated in the preparation of ***Student scientific conference – “Science connecting nations”*** where VUA YOUTH sessions were organized. VUA YOUTH also supported 2 students (SUA Nitra) who participated in the international summer school organized by the Belgorod State Agricultural University, Russia.

VUA Award of Excellence

The representatives of VUA member universities voted for the most active university to be awarded the VUA Award of Excellence during the VUA General Meeting at Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Poland on September 28-30, 2015. SUA as the university currently holding the VUA Presidency decided not to be nominated. The winner, ***Warsaw University of Life Sciences***, Poland, obtained 9 votes. The VUA President prof. Peter Bielik presented the award to prof. Bogdan Klepacki, WULS Vice-Rector.

VUA THINK POOL

This tool was introduced in 2012 in order to inform VUA members about new possibilities of cooperation, to search for project partners within our network and to disseminate activities that might be of interest of and inspire other VUA members. The tool is **accessible** through

VUA website (www.vua.uniag.sk) 6 posts promoting events (mostly international conferences, call for papers, other events) organized by the VUA members were published during the period of January – August 2016. Mgr. Valach highlighted that the tool offers an easy and effective method of contact.

VUA 2015 General Meeting

General Meeting of Visegrad University Association 2015 took place at **Warsaw University of Life Sciences**, Poland on **September 28-30**. The meeting was attended by 40 representatives of 20 VUA member universities coming from 10 countries.

The General Meeting was opened by VUA President, prof. Peter Bielik and prof. Kazimierz Banasik, SGGW Rector’s Attorney. President Bielik evaluated the association activities and introduced the plans of Visegrad University Association for the upcoming period. The General Meeting approved the VUA Annual Report as well the Proposal of activities for 2016. During 2015, new universities applied for VUA membership. Four of them were approved by the General Meeting: Uman National University of Horticulture, Ukraine, University of Agribusiness and Rural Development, Bulgaria, University of Zilina, Slovakia, Louisiana State University Agricultural Centre and Louisiana State University College of Agriculture, USA.

Moreover, new VUA Vice-Presidents – Janusz Zmija as the First Vice-President, Janos Tozser and Alexander Turyanskiy – and Executive Committee Members – Tatiana Litvinenko, Agata Malak-Rawlikowska, Henrietta Nagy, Robert Pokluda – were elected.

Promotion of VUA

Understanding the importance of disseminating and promotion activities, **Visegrad University Association** has been widely promoted during 2015-2016. VUA has been represented at various academic and scientific events in Slovakia and abroad. Similar to the previous period, VUA is presented and complete information on its activities and members are provided to all academic and diplomatic visits of SUA.

Financial report 2015

Expenditures:		Income:	
<i>Activity/Cost item</i>	<i>Amount in EUR</i>	<i>Activity/Cost item</i>	<i>Amount in EUR</i>
VJBSD, printing, editing and publishing	1400	VUA Membership Fees (Sep 15, 2016)	8400
Doctoral symposium	803,77		

VUA Summer School	1000		
VUA YOUTH	738		
VUA GM	1640,11		
VUA Award of Excellence	130,90		
Activities in total	5712,78		
Promotion	1124,80		
Secretariat	1051,22		
Other costs	9,60		
Total	7898,40	Total	8400
Positive balance	501,60		

Both the VUA Annual Report 2016 and VUA Financial Report 2016 were approved unanimously.

3. Introduction of VUA activities for the period 2016-2017

Mgr. Vladislav Valach and prof. Elena Horská, VUA Liaison Officer, jointly introduced VUA activities for the period 2016-2017 in relation to the following points:

- "Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development"
- VUA symposium Godollo
- VUA Summer School
- VUA supports IVF projects
- VUA YOUTH
- VUA Award of Excellence
- VUA 2017 General Meeting
- Promoting of VUA
- Preliminary use of VUA budget

"Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development"

There will be two issues of the journal published in April and October 2017. ***Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development*** (VJBSD) is registered with De Gruyter Open Access in order to raise the awareness of the journal and increase its citation rate as proposed at the VUA General Meeting 2012. Each issue will contain 8 articles.

“Future Scientists for Sustainable Development” – 3rd VUA YOUTH Scientific Session

The annual scientific conference organized for bachelor, master and PhD students will be organized at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of the Szent István University, Godollo, Hungary. The aim of this conference is to provide a forum for bachelor, master as well as doctoral students of VUA member universities to present their research results at the conference and to have a publication in a conference proceeding with ISBN. Proposed number of participants is 100 and proposed date is 23 November 2016.

VUA Summer school “AGRISUMMER IN BLACK SOIL REGIONS OF RUSSIA”

In 2017, VUA summer school will be organized by Belgorod State Agricultural University, Russia, and Orel State Agrarian University, Russia, in two following modules starting with Belgorod module and finishing with Orel module. Proposed number of participants is 25-30.

VUA supports IVF projects

It is proposed that VUA offers the support to IVF projects coordinated by VUA members in order to strengthen the connections of VUA members and the International Visegrad Fund. The proposed support will include promotion and dissemination, publication activities (Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development), and minimum financial support of 500€ (the support will be specified so that it meets the aims and objectives of VUA). Mgr. Valach emphasized the importance of connection of VUA and IVF activities.

VUA YOUTH

Students organized under the Visegrad University Association (VUA) maintain regular communication and contact and create a bridge between students and university management. Communication proceeds mainly on social media and by emails. Students also meet during conferences, foreign studies and student exchange programs among the universities not only those united by VUA.

It is proposed that students are supported to be active within VUA and new students join VUA YOUTH network in order to support the aims and objective of Visegrad University Association within student community. VUA Executive Committee proposes that mobilities of master and PhD students are supported through ***VUA YOUTH Grant Programme***. Grant winners should be selected from the applicants based on the criteria specified in the call. Mgr. Valach appealed to the VUA members for helping young students that are interested to be more active.

VUA Award of Excellence

It is proposed that also in 2017 ***VUA Award of Excellence*** is awarded. The award will be awarded annually at the General Meeting to one VUA member university with the outstanding contribution to the aims and objectives of the association based on the following conditions: sustainable achievements in the field of education, science and research, active international cooperation within and outside VUA, promotion of Visegrad University Association, other

activities supporting the common goals of Visegrad University Association, and paid VUA membership fee.

VUA 2017 General Meeting

VUA GM will be organized at Russian State Agrarian University – MTAA. VUA Executive Committee proposed that the university organized VUA General Meeting is exempt from paying the VUA Membership fee for the year the GM is organized. All VUA members were invited to participate to create a bridge between Europe and Russia. It was proposed to organize the VUA GM 2017 on 20-22 September with 20 September as arrival date. GM 2018 was proposed to be organized in Kiev. The place of the event will be decided during the GM 2017.

Promoting of VUA

VUA Executive Committee would like to ask all VUA members to promote the association and its activities as widely as possible.

Preliminary use of VUA budget in 2016-2017:

Activity/Cost item	Amount in EUR
Visegrad journal VJBSD – De Groyter	1440
Visegrad journal VJBSD editing and paper version	1200
Godollo conference	600
Summer school	1000
VUA supports IVF projects	1000
VUA General Meeting	2000
Activities in total	7240
Promotion	250
VUA Secretariat	500
Total	7990

The VUA activities for the period 2016-2017 were approved unanimously.

4. Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development

VJBSD has its own e-version on the website of VUA and is submitted to De Gruyter. Prof. Elena Horská set out the aims to show the quality of journal, Board to increase the citation rate (Scopus, Web of Science, conferences, other journals), to promote the journal, to encourage students and researches to provide more articles and to register in new databases also by using ministerial lists. It was proposed to use skype conferences in the process of selection of articles by Editorial Board.

5. Prof. Grigorii Kaletnik, Rector of Vinnytsia National Agrarian University, Ukraine

Prof. Grigorii Kaletnik presented experience of preparation of competitive specialists for Ukrainian agrarian sector of economics on the base of All Ukrainian Scientific Educational Consortium, in which he acts as President. The Consortium includes faculties, departments, enterprises, councils and focuses on research and education ensured by high-quality lecturers, doctors of sciences, professors, candidates of sciences, academicians, correspondent members and honoured workers. He emphasized the improvement of staff potential related to entering of the Consortium. The Consortium focuses on the scientific activities, formation of scientific knowledge, formation of human resources for agro-industrial complex, training of students and lecturers, creation of joint laboratories, and interconnection of theory and practice. It was proposed that closer cooperation of both organization will be implemented in the future.

6. Introduction of new VUA members

The following three universities applied for becoming full members of the VUA:

Óbuda University, Hungary

Address: 1034 Budapest, Bécsi út 96/B, Hungary

Rector: Mihály Réger

Date of foundation: 2010

Mission: The mission of the university is to serve the economy through development and high-level knowledge transfer and innovation. The program of education is balanced to meet the demands of long-lasting basic knowledge, up-to-date professional and practical knowledge, and the application of these. The education process is built on the human relations and cooperative abilities of the students and professors. In this atmosphere students learn civic values naturally, and build them into their own scale of values.

Kursk State Agricultural Academy named after I. I. Ivanov, Russia

Address: K. Marx St., 70, Kursk 305021, Russia

Rector: Vladimir A. Semykin

Date of foundation: 1951

Mission: The mission of the Academy is to promote the sustainable development of the region and country by means of: satisfying educational needs of individuals through training of specialists able to work in changing conditions and able to ensure high-quality development of agriculture and its economy within the region and country; quality management in the field of higher education programmes and post-graduation programmes, basic and applied research activities, consulting services; organization of innovation activities in order to preserve and strengthen the status of the Academy as a leading agricultural higher education organization and research and methodological centre in terms of integration into the global research and educational sphere; and conservation, concentration and dissemination of intellectual, research, ethical and cultural values of the Russian academic community.

Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Poland

Address: ul. Konarskiego 2, 08-110 Siedlce, Poland

Rector: Tamara Zacharuk

Date of foundation: 1969

Mission: Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities is the only university in the Masovian Voivodship apart from universities in Warsaw. The university focuses on providing education and training in the spheres of major interest of its faculties, which include humanities, natural sciences, economic, legal and computer sciences, mathematics, physics and chemistry. It also aims at teacher training, scientific and research development and activities by means of international cooperation.

Louisiana State University applied for an upgrade of its membership from honorary to full member.

Mgr. Valach informed the participants that Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary, cancelled its membership due to restructuralization.

7. Discussion and approval of new members by General Meeting

All organizations applying for becoming VUA members were approved unanimously and membership upgrade was also approved unanimously.

8. Awards Ceremony – Visegrad Award of Excellence

The representatives of members voted for the most active university to be awarded VUA Award of Excellence. The winner was Szent István University, Hungary, receiving 18 votes and prof. János Tózsér, Rector of the University, accepted the award presented by the VUA President, Dr.h.c. prof. Peter Bielik, PhD. Other nominated university, University of Agribusiness and Rural Development received 1 vote, Slovak University of Agriculture received 1 vote (void).

9. AGRIMBA (International Network for the MBA Agribusiness and Commerce) becomes a standing committee of VUA

AGRIMBA is a standing committee of ICA, which is the only open general network covering the whole Europe. ICA is guided by General Board responsible for quality control. It offers custom-made MBA programme for students, which is accredited by both national accreditation authority and the network. Students obtain national Master diploma as well as international AGRIMBA diploma. The MBA programme involves experts and managers from agribusiness and students from abroad and provides a good opportunity to support agribusiness. Mgr. Valach pointed out that if the cooperation is approved, it would enable the VUA to be more open and AGRIMBA to find new partners for the Association. The idea of AGRIMBA becoming a standing committee of VUA will also be presented in 27-29 September 2016 during the General Meeting of AGRIMBA in Warsaw.

The idea of AGRIMBA becoming a standing committee of VUA was approved unanimously.

10. Cooperation possibilities with Louisiana State University

Dr. John Russin presented educational and research cooperation possibilities with Louisiana State University. He provided possibilities to exchange students and to realize faculty exchanges, practical training, visits and conferences and presented US funding opportunities. He also offered a growing list of common discipline specializations and to host series of workshops at Louisiana State University in order to offer expertise aimed at partnerships, technical transfer and fund raising. Other possibilities of cooperation involved the field of entrepreneurship and the citizen community covered under the motto “to bring university to people and to bring people to university”.

11. Presentations of invited speakers

Ms Cristina Amaral, FAO deputy regional representative

Representative of FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central-Asia spoke about the role of FAO in the world and its focus on food security and nutrition; healthy life; elimination of hunger, poverty but also today's overweight and obesity; promotion of sustainable practices in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture; management of livestock diseases; pesticide management; and coping with natural disasters and challenges in the form of urbanization, climate change, greenhouse gases, alien pests, microbial resistance, change in age structure and sustainable energy delivery. Ms Amaral pointed out that cooperation of FAO and universities could help further development of knowledge, technologies and research and that cooperation with VUA could make agribusiness more attractive and improve agri-food trade and eliminate the gap between practice and theory by using traditional knowledge of farmers in university environment in future scientific sphere.

Prof. Dr. Lajos Helyes, Vice-Rector for Research and Scientific Affairs, SZIU

Prof. Helyes presented the role of the Szent István University's doctoral schools in today's scientific life and the major research topics of the doctoral schools. The schools were established as accredited PhD programmes coming under individual faculties of the University in areas covering biological sciences, environmental sciences, animal husbandry, food sciences, horticulture and landscape architecture, business studies and agricultural engineering. The doctoral schools offer an example of high-quality education and training of future generation. With the current number of PhD students 370 and that of international students 85, the doctoral schools orient at implementing their educational, research and training activities to prepare students for business, government or industry sectors.

12. Closing remarks

The VUA Secretary General appreciated involvement of all participating members and the VUA President expressed his belief in the high level of success in fulfilment of future planned activities.