



Visegrad University Association

General Meeting

University of Debrecen, Hungary, 03 September, 2018

Minutes

1. Official Opening

1. **Dr. István Komlósi, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences and Environmental Management**, welcomed participants of the VUA General Meeting, stressing that it was one of a series of events organized to mark the 150th anniversary of agricultural higher education in Debrecen. In his opening speech VUA President Dr. Dr.h.c. prof. Ing. Peter Bielik, PhD., Rector of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra acknowledged the special significance of this jubilee in choosing Debrecen as the venue for this year's scientific conference.

2. VUA Annual Report 2017 and VUA Financial Report 2017

Presented by Mgr. Vladislav Valach, VUA Secretary General, the VUA Annual Report 2017 contained the following parts:

1. Overview of VUA activities for the period October 2017 to August 2018
 - 1.1 "Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development"
 - 1.2 Innovation as a driving force of sustainable development – 4th VUA YOUTH Scientific Session
 - 1.3 VUA Rectors' Symposium II. - Diversifying Revenue and Private Sector Support: Successful Case Studies
 - 1.4. VUA Summer School: Agrisummer in Blacksoil Regions of Russia
 - 1.5. VUA supports IVF projects
 - 1.6 VUA YOUTH
 - 1.7 VUA Award of Excellence
 - 1.8 VUA Think Pool
 - 1.9 VUA 2017 General Meeting
 - 1.10 Promotion of VUA

1.1 "Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development"

In 2017 two issues of "**Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development**" were published. Issue no.1 vol. 6, 2017, (reported in VUA Annual Report 2017) contained seven papers.

Issue no.2 vol. 6 was released in November 2017, containing a further 7 papers. Issue no. 1 vol. 7 was released in May 2018 and contained 6 papers.

The Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development is registered with De Gruyter Open Access in order to raise awareness of the journal and increase its citation rate. To improve the quality of publishing, De Gruyter has allowed use of their CrossCheck System to ensure the content we publish is original and trustworthy. This system includes a database of scholarly content against which we can measure manuscripts, as well as software to do the screening.

De Gruyter Open Access services are provided with VUA covering costs of technical support and language corrections.

1.2 "Innovation as a driving force of sustainable development " – 4th VUA YOUTH Scientific session

On 22 November 2017, **Visegrad University Association** and the **Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences** of **Szent István University , Gödöllő**, organized the 4th international scientific conference for students in Gödöllő, Hungary. Since its establishment, VUA has considered the support of young students and young researchers a key priority.

In the VUA YOUTH sessions, **56 international students from 23 countries submitted their research papers in 3 sessions and participated with presentations** (not only VUA members: Slovakia, Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Moldavia, Nigeria, Ghana, Jordan, Serbia, Syria, Somalia, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Palestine, Poland, Mexico, Myanmar, China, South Africa, Turkey, USA.) Several awards were given to outstanding students.

1.3 VUA Rectors' Symposium II. - Diversifying Revenue and Private Sector Support: Successful Case Studies

Originally designed by LSU AgCenter and the Hungarian Embassy to the USA, this year's symposium was held April 16 through 20 with a view to creating an intensive educational programme with private sector collaborators. The Rectors' Symposium provided many positive results for all 24 participants.

1.4 VUA Summer School: Agrisummer in Blacksoil Regions of Russia

The International Summer School was organized by Belgorod State Agricultural University and Kursk State Agrarian University, Russia, between 27 July and 12 August, 2018.

The programme of the summer school offered professional presentations on selected topics of agricultural production, education and science in Russia and the visited regions of Belgorod and Kursk, as well as sight visits. The 16 participants from China, Germany, the Netherlands, Azerbaijan, and Russia also enjoyed the interesting cultural programmes.

1.5 VUA supports IVF projects

In order to strengthen the connections of VUA members and the International Visegrad Fund, VUA offers support to IVF projects coordinated by VUA members (as proposed and approved by the VUA General Meeting of 2015).

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 2017 there was no request to support an IVF project.

1.6 VUA YOUTH

Established during the V4 Doctoral Symposium: Multifunctionality and Regional Development (Gödöllő and Gyöngyös, Hungary, October 3-3, 2013), VUA YOUTH is a sub-section of the Visegrad University Association with a mission to help fulfill the objectives of the association. It 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 2017 VUA YOUTH participated in the preparation of “**Innovation as a driving force of sustainable development**” – 4th VUA YOUTH Scientific Session.

1.7 VUA Award of Excellence

During the VUA General Meeting 2017, the VUA Award of Excellence was awarded to the member university voted the most active. The award went to Louisiana State University, USA, as the appreciation of their active participation in VUA activities. The award was presented by Prof. Peter Bielik and Dr. Galina Zolina to Prof. John Russin.

1.8 VUA THINK POOL

This tool was introduced in 2012 in order to inform VUA members about new possibilities of cooperation, search for project partners within our network and disseminate activities that might be of interest to and inspire other VUA members. The tool is **accessible** through the 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 August 2017 – August 2018.

1.9 VUA 2015 General Meeting

The General Meeting of the **Visegrad University Association 2017** took place at the Russian State Agrarian University – Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy (RSAU – MTAA), Russia on September 13- 15. **Warsaw University of Life Sciences**, Poland on **September 28-30**. The meeting was attended by more than 40 representatives of 20 VUA member universities of 10 countries.

The General Meeting was opened by Dr. Galina Zolina and VUA President. Prof. Peter Bielik. President Bielik evaluated the association's activities and introduced the plans of the Visegrad University Association for the upcoming period. The General Meeting approved the VUA Annual Report as well the Proposal of activities for 2018.

During 2017, new universities applied for VUA membership. Three of the applicants were approved by the General Meeting and became members of VUA:

Eszterházy Károly University, Hungary
University of Debrecen, Hungary and
Kyiv Cooperative Institute of Business and Law, Ukraine.

1.10 Promoting VUA

Understanding the importance of disseminating and promotion activities, the **Visegrad University Association** has been widely promoted during 2017-2018: VUA has been represented at various academic and scientific events in Slovakia and abroad.

2. Financial report 2017-2018

Expenditures:		Income:	
Activity/Cost item	Amount in EUR	Activity/Cost item	Amount in EUR
VJBSD, printing, editing and publishing	1614,40	VUA membership Fees (Sep 2018)	8385
Doctoral symposium, VUA YOUTH	789		
VUA GM	611,02		
VUA Summer School	400		
Activities in total	3414,4		
Promotion	436,80		
Secretariat	0		
Other costs	0		
Travelling	2932,84		
Total	6784,04	Total	8385

Positive balance: 1600.96

3. Introduction of VUA activities for the period 2019

Mgr. Vladislav Valach and prof. Elena Horská, VUA Liaison Officer, jointly introduced VUA activities for the period 2019 in relation to the following points:

- "Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development"
- VUA symposium Godollo "Smart Development and Sustainability"
- VUA Summer School
- VUA supports IVF projects
- VUA YOUTH
- VUA Award of Excellence
- VUA 2019 General Meeting
- Promoting VUA

Preliminary use of VUA budget

Changes are envisioned in the editorial board itself, Prof. Horká will be replaced.

1. "Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development"

There will be two issues of the journal published in April and October 2018. The **Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development** (VJBSD) is registered with De Gruyter Open Access in order to raise awareness of the journal and increase its citation rate as proposed at the VUA General Meeting 2012. Each issue will contain 8 articles.

Key tasks for the next year are: greater promotion of the Journal, more articles, and higher citation rates. (Scopus, Web of Science, conferences, other journals)

2. “Smart Development and Sustainability” – 5th 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, under the auspices of the Visegrad University Association on November 20, 2018**. The aim of this **conference** is to provide a forum for **bachelor, master as well as doctoral students of VUA institutions** to present their research results at the conference and to have a publication in a conference proceeding with ISBN. Professors and lecturers from VUA institutions will constitute the scientific committee whose role will be to provide students with guidelines regarding the continuation of their research. This conference also functions as a platform for young researchers (also outside the CEE region) to build new professional relationships.

3.VUA Summer school

It is proposed that a VUA Summer School should be organized by a VUA member university/universities on the topics of sustainable development, agriculture, life sciences, etc. (Further ideas and suggestions on the part of VUA members are most welcome.) The organizing VUA member institution will be exempt from paying the VUA membership fee for the given year.)

4.VUA supports IVF projects

It is proposed that VUA should offer 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 a minimum financial support of 500€ (the support will be specified so that it meets the aims and objectives of VUA).

5. VUA YOUTH

Students organized under the Visegrad University Association (VUA) maintain regular communication and contact. Since 2014, when VUA Youth was founded, more and more students have engaged in mutual cooperation, which can lead to new possibilities in publication and presentation of results (question of LSU: how could their students participate and at what levels?). Dr. Henrietta Nagy (Godollo) agreed to be in touch with LSU regarding the matter.

Communication proceeds mainly on social media and by email. Students also meet during conferences, foreign studies and student exchange programmes among universities (also outside VUA). Equally important is the issue of the possibility of students communicating with university and faculty management.

It is imperative that new students should join the VUA YOUTH network in order to support the aims and objective of the Visegrad University Association within student communities. It is important that VUA members should contribute to helping students become more active.

6. VUA Award of Excellence

It is proposed that in 2019, too, **VUA Award of Excellence** should be awarded. The award will be presented annually at the General Meeting to one VUA member university with the most outstanding contribution to the realization of 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 the Visegrad University Association, and paid VUA membership fee.

7. VUA 2017 General Meeting

It is proposed that the VUA GM 2019 should be organized by the University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy, Kosice, Slovakia. It has been agreed that the university organizing the VUA General Meeting will be exempt from paying the VUA Membership fee for the given year. The exact date of the event will be decided later.

8. Promoting VUA

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

Preliminary use of VUA budget:

Activity/Cost item	Amount in EUR
Visegrad journal VJBSD – De Gruyter	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

9. Introduction of new VUA members

The following three universities have applied for full membership of VUA:

Bila Tserkva National Agrarian University, Ukraine

Postal Address: 09117 Bila Tserkva, Ukraine

Rector: prof. Dr. Anatolii Danylenko

Date of foundation: 1630

Number of students: 10000

Staff: 370

The mission of the University is aimed at qualitative education of competitive specialists for national and international agricultural sectors to meet modern professional challenges on high levels of science. As a knowledge resource, the university builds sustainable partnerships with other educational institutions, community and public agencies, NGOs and the private sector in Ukraine and abroad.

University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences Brno

Postal address: Palackého tr. 1946/1, Brno, Czech Republic

Rector: Prof. MVDr. Alois Necas, Ph.D., MBA

Date of foundation: December 1918

Number of students: 2939

Staff: 743

The mission of the university is to provide university education and undertake scientific, research and other activities as well as specialized activities in the areas of veterinary medicine, veterinary hygiene and ecology, food safety and quality, and pharmacy, and to pursue other activities to fulfill the mission of UVPS Brno as an academic institution.

The University's strategic plan is to develop its status as an internationally recognized university.

10. Discussion and approval of new members by the General Meeting

Both organizations applying to become VUA members were unanimously approved.

11. Awards Ceremony – Visegrad Award of Excellence

The representatives of VUA members voted for the most active university to be awarded the VUA Award of Excellence. The winner was Timiryazev Moscow University. Dr. Galina Zolina accepted the award presented by the VUA President, Dr.h.c. Prof. Peter Bielik, PhD., on behalf of all the students and scientists of her institution.

Dr. László Stündl, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences and Food Management, University of Debrecen

In his report on RTD activities at the Faculty, Dr. Stündl described the scientific and educational background provided by this faculty for the food industry, which accounts for 19% of the national agro-food industry. With 1800 students and 2 doctoral schools, the faculty is among the world's top 200 agricultural universities. Relying heavily on the interconnectedness of education and research, the RTD mission of the Faculty is to produce healthy food of good quality in a healthy and sustainable environment.

Several projects have been financed by the European Union and the Hungarian State, with the following RTD topics in focus:

- Development of **foodstuffs with special health benefits**
- **Resource efficient** (precision) **technologies** for plant production, animal husbandry & horticulture
- Integration of **agro-environmental schemes** into agricultural production
- Utilisation of **renewable energy** sources of agricultural origin
- Development of technologies adequate to **climate change**

There is a need for a synergy of core and connected research groups/areas of Debrecen (food, agricultural science, natural sciences, and medical and health sciences).

9. Presentations of invited speakers

Ms Susanne Lehner, University of Bonn

EQAsce (Education and Qualification Alliance) represents activities that grew out of university and put into this brand which is internationally oriented, chain oriented (all actors), standard oriented and lifelong oriented (individual qualification paths are depicted for education and registration). It focuses on three fields of action: international networking of knowledge providers with training, comprehensive external representation and continuous updating of targeted offers for further training courses, and competent choice of teaching content and methods of training by technical, industry and sector experts.

EQAsce is also responsible for the coordination of global education projects and **quality management initiatives**.

EQAsce offers modular, harmonized courses and course series. These courses lead to degrees that can only be acquired through EQAsce. In this way it offers qualifications oriented specifically towards the international agri-food sector. One main aim of its training philosophy is to develop long-term competence in terms of a **lifelong learning** concept.

EQAsce's vision and mission, to become an **accreditation agency in agri-food, is highly relevant to VUA as shown by several members' suggestions and calls for an autonomous and neutral accreditation agency**.

Dr. Lehner stresses the importance of the **“one-health”** concept: integrative management of health-related risks with simultaneous consideration of 5 components: human, health, animal health, environmental protection, food safety, and international trade. Networking, good partnership in work and research are indispensable.

Dr. Tibor Mezei, advisor to Dean, Szent István University, Gödöllő

In his presentation Mr. Mezei highlighted the major challenges facing university teaching today. Some of these are: lack of specialists who can teach in the non-traditional way, lack of good agricultural IT specialists, changes in generation Z's main source of knowledge and preferred learning style.

Further challenges are: academics' time-consuming administrative duties, spiraling costs, increasing student expectations.

To tackle the above challenges, an intelligent device has been designed which is Internet-based and functions as a platform for students, professors, staff, and campus administration alike: the Szent István Multicampus Integrated Knowledge Management System.

A multiple campus video conferencing system is in place to ease time-consuming administrative tasks. Intelligent learning materials, including E-learning materials, are created by training specialists, as well as software to evaluate student performance and knowledge level.

The expectation is that in terms of effectiveness of learning, this system offers a much higher percentage of retained information after learning than other methods. Its primary driving force is to provide students with skills necessary for the workplace.

**Dr. Csaba Fogarassy, Ph.D., Regional Economics and Rural Development Research Group,
Szent István University, Gödöllő**

In promoting the teaching of circular economy, a new philosophy that should be more successful and more competitive than previous economic directions, Dr. Fogarassy stresses the importance of turning this thinking into business opportunities. A Ph D course in 2006 focused on transition management issues from linear to circular economy accompanied by changes in technology, too.

He advocates using supporting material (Facebook-based, journals, especially the Visegrad Journal) , extending an invitation to international Ph D students, too.

Circular economy relies heavily on the principles of using local resources, zero, waste, sustainable products, etc.

Our main objective today is to make new opportunities for market players and build new business models that operate like ecosystems.

All presentations will be made available on the VUA website

Prof. Horska congratulates Dr. Fogarassy on using the Visegrad Journal as a dissemination platform.

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.