

BUANEWS

Balkan Universities Association E-Bulletin





Balkan Universities Association

“DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION CONGRESS IN THE BALKANS AND BLACK SEA REGION” CARRIED OUT BY THE ASSOCIATION OF THE BALKAN UNIVERSITIES AND THE BLACK SEA UNIVERSITIES



The “Dialogue and Cooperation Congress in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region”, organized by the Balkan Universities Association (BUA), the largest higher education union in the region, and the Black Sea Universities Association (BSUN). At the meeting, which hosted important names from the Balkans and countries with a coast to the Black Sea, it was emphasized that lasting peace and sustainable development would be possible with cooperation in the academy.

BUA Secretary General Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, BUA Term President Prof. Dr. Mircea Dimitru, Rector of Bucharest University Prof. Dr. Marian Preda, Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Sorin Costreie, BSUN Term President Prof. Dr. Karin Markides, BSUN General Secretary Prof. Dr. Eden Mamut were in the Organizing Committee. The historical meeting hosted by the University of Bucharest where important names of the region’s politics, diplomacy, bureaucracy and academy took place started with a grand opening ceremony.

The host Romania attended the meeting at the prime minister and ministerial level whereas Turkey was represented by a large delegation formed of the university rectors and representatives of the union under the chairmanship of CoHE President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar. At the meeting, where the senior names of NATO, EU and regional countries were present, it was emphasized that the world could come out of the crisis it was going through, and that sustainable peace and development could be established in this way by developing and strengthening cooperation in the academy.

CoHE President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar: “We Commit to Actively Supporting Turkish Universities to Collaborate with International Unions and Institutions.”

Expressing that the world is going through difficult times in his speech at the opening, CoHE President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar said, “Instead of coming together for dialogue and cooperation against the difficulties we all face, societies started to build high walls among themselves. Our task is to create pathways that show how coexistence is possible. In this respect, scientific and cultural cooperation to be developed between our universities is one of the most promising ways. As CoHE, we are committed to actively supporting Turkish universities to cooperate with international associations and institutions. As international interactions expand, the quality of higher education and research will improve all over the world. I believe that we should raise all our students with a globalized mindset on the path to internationalization.”

Stating that Turkish higher education is growing day by day with 208 universities and more than 7 million students, Özvar said, “Turkey, which is the largest country in terms of the number of students in European higher education and offers quality higher education, has a great potential to contribute to the sustainable development of the Balkans and the Black Sea.” He stated that Turkey will contribute highly to the region’s higher education. He ended his speech by saying, “I believe that this meeting will create an important platform for exchanging information and ideas, and will also strengthen the ties between universities in the Black Sea and the Balkans.”



Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Tabakoğlu: “The Congress will be the first step of a new beginning in Europe and the world, especially in the Balkans and the Black Sea region”

BUA General Secretary and Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu stated that there was a high level of participation from host Romania and the countries in the region at the meeting, where Turkey was represented at the level of CoHE Presidency.

Emphasizing that holding such a meeting in Romania, the border neighbor of Ukraine, in the days when the war continued with all its violence, has a historical significance for the future vision of the region, Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu said, “In

these days of increased stress in the region, we come together and call for dialogue and cooperation. I believe that this meeting will be the first step of a new beginning in Europe and the world, especially in the Balkans and the Black Sea region.”

Rector Tabakoğlu thanked everyone who contributed, especially CoHE President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar, Bucharest Ambassador Füsün Aramaz and BUA Term President Prof. Dr. Mircea Dimitru, Rector of Bucharest University Prof. Dr. Marian Preda and Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Sorin Costreie.



Speeches that took the pulse of the region were made at the Congress ...



Delivering a speech at the opening of the congress, BUA Term President Bucharest University Rector Prof. Dr. Marian Preda expressed that they hosted an important meeting in order to develop cooperation to find solutions to problems and to draw a vision for the future.

Participating in the opening of the meeting with a video message, Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciuca stated that the problems in the region can only be solved through dialogue and this can only be possible with cooperation in the academy, and stated that universities have a great responsibility at this point.

European Parliament Commissioner Mariya Gabriel drew attention to the importance of the Erasmus Student and Academician Exchange Mobility Program and stated that this program led European societies to get to know each other closely and to open cooperation channels.

NATO Deputy General Secretary Mircea Geoana, who attended the opening with a video message from Brussels, emphasized that Europe cannot be the same as before and stated that the Black Sea and Balkan regions have gained strategic importance at this point.

Emphasizing that the meeting jointly organized by BUA and BSUN created an environment of dialogue and cooperation in the field of higher education and that the environment will have positive results in the region, Romanian Education Minister Liga Deca said that universities have great responsibilities for peace and stated that this meeting is a milestone in the region's common future in education.

Romanian Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitization, Sebastian Burduja, who said that the cooperation of universities in the field of security and new technologies will increase regional prosperity, emphasized that the pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia War have deeply affected the region, and that this effect can be minimized with a permanent peace environment to be achieved through dialogue and cooperation.

Expressing that the meeting where the important universities of the Balkans and the Black Sea come together in these difficult days is a hope for the future of humanity and the world, Romanian Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu expressed his thought that if peace cannot be achieved today, the future will be darker for the world.

Romanian Defense Minister Vasile Dincu, who attended the opening with a video message, drew attention to the strategic effects of the Ukraine-Russia War and said that these effects can be overcome with cooperation between countries and universities.

Emphasizing that BUA and BSUN play important roles in the region, Greek Higher Education Institution President Prof. Pericles Mitkas stated that the unions will continue to work for sustainable development and a free world. Prof. Mitkas thanked Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu and his delegation for leading the two unions, of which he held the presidency in the past, to come together.

Stating that such meetings are very important in such difficult times, Romanian Prime Minister Adviser Iulian Chifu said that universities should undertake important tasks on the environment, which is one of the main agenda items of the meeting.

Saying that the world is on the verge of a major change in technology and robotics, and that no one knows what kind of world awaits children, Romanian House of Representatives Member George Tuta drew attention to the need for the whole world to focus on this and called for cooperation from all countries.

Saying that 30 years ago, he attended a big meeting hosted by Boğaziçi University, where European and Balkan universities came together, Romanian Former President Emil Constantinescu stated that the gathering of important universities from the Balkans and the Black Sea was much more valuable than the meeting 30 years ago. Stating that today's meeting would shed light on the way to end conflicts on the basis of dialogue and cooperation, Constantinescu expressed his belief that important cooperation and projects will be implemented in the near future.

Stating that there is democracy and freedom in the character of universities, BSUN Term President Prof. Karin Markides emphasized the necessity of voicing these concepts more loudly than ever as two unions as the pioneer of sustainable development and lasting peace.

Stating that they are very happy to host a big meeting, even if it was postponed for two years due to the pandemic, BUA Term President Prof. Dr. Mircea Dumitru thanked Rector of Trakya University Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, Bucharest University Rector Prof. Dr. Marian Preda and the university authorities for their great efforts in the organization of the meeting and said "welcome" to all the participants.

Making statements about the establishment and activities of BUA, Trakya University Retired Lecturer Prof. Dr. Hilmi İbar said, "BUA should have much more members, just like the European Universities Association. At this point, the joint work of the two university unions will create new opportunities and facilities. Why would the youth of this region study in Western Europe? We must fulfill our duties."

After the opening speeches, the congress continued with the messages of the Bucharest ambassadors of the countries of the region, the "Conference on Dialogue and Economic Cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region" where the world-renowned economist and scientist Prof. Dr. Jeffrey Sachs was a speaker and "Panel on the Role of Universities in a New Regional and Global Context".





CALL FOR PEACE, DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION FROM AMBASSADORS AT THE CONGRESS ON DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION IN THE BALKANS AND BLACK SEA REGION



The ambassadors, participating in the “Dialogue and Cooperation Congress in the Balkans and Black Sea Region”, which was implemented in cooperation with the Balkan Universities Association (BUA) and the Black Sea Universities Association (BSUN) called for dialogue and cooperation to ensure long lasting peace.

After the speeches of BUA and BSUN member university representatives and important names of diplomacy and bureaucracy in Europe and host Romania, the ambassadors of the union member states took the floor. The common message of the ambassadors was that the vision for the future can be drawn through cooperation and dialogue.

French Ambassador to Bucharest, Laurence Auer, said that the Russian-Ukrainian War does not only contain conflicts, but also has multi-component problems, and said that it was their duty as Europe to keep communication and dialogue channels open. Expressing his views on equal opportunities in education, energy and economy, Auer stated that the EU member states acting together would serve peace.

Expressing that the issues related to the Black Sea and the Balkans were of direct concern to Italy, Ambassador Alfredo Maria Durante Mangoni emphasized the importance of cooperation for sustainable development and economy and thanked those who contributed to the realization of the meeting.

Saying that Russia's aggressive attitude threatened the region and humanity and was a major obstacle to development, Polish



Ambassador Maciej Lang emphasized the need to continue to come together and work to produce new ideas and strategies to overcome this current situation and the obstacles it had created.

Expressing that they were very pleased to attend such a comprehensive meeting when the country and the region needed dialogue and cooperation the most, Ambassador of Ukraine Teofil Bauer drew attention to the fact that education and science should not be limited to serving the present of humanity, but should also have an important place in the construction of the future.

Karakossatis from the Greek Embassy in Bucharest, who stated that the developments in the world now concerned all societies, expressed the importance of coming together and acting together in order to find appropriate solutions.

Aramaz: “Turkey is a Balkan and a Black Sea Country across the board. It has deep ties with the region.”

Noting that Turkey was a Balkan country and one of the countries with the longest border to the Black Sea, and that there were deep ties with these two regions, Turkish Ambassador to Bucharest Füsün Aramaz said, “I find it very important that these two unions come together at this point. I think we can build a beautiful future for the region together. We must develop cooperation for economic development. Pandemic and war negatively affected the region. We must work even harder together for prosperity and peace. These studies and projects will serve for peace and tranquility. Turkey will continue to

be a country that continues its efforts based on dialogue and cooperation with all its might to ensure long lasting peace”.

Stating that 15 universities from Turkey were members of BSUN and 12 universities from BUA, Ambassador Aramaz ended his speech by expressing his thanks to all universities

and participants, especially to Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, BUA Term President Prof. Dr. Mircea Dimitru, Rector of Bucharest University Prof. Dr. Marian Preda, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Sorin Costreie, BSUN Term President Karin Markides and Secretary General Prof. Dr. Eden Mamut.



HEAD OF THE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF TURKEY PROF. DR. EROL ÖZVAR AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE GREECE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION PROF. PERICLES MITKAS TALKED ABOUT “THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURBULENT TIMES”

The “Congress on Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region”, organized jointly by two powerful unions, of which the universities of the countries bordering the Balkans and the Black Sea are members, hosted two important names. In the panel titled “The Role of Higher Education in Turbulent Times”, where President of YÖK Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar and the President of the Greek Higher Education Institution Prof. Pericles Mitkas came together, it was emphasized that the exit from the crisis environment brought about by the pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia War was possible with cooperation, and that universities had important duties in this cooperation.

Delivering his speech on four themes, YÖK President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar discusses these four themes “higher education in turbulent times with a comparative and global perspective with a particular focus on COVID-19 and forcibly displaced people” “Turkish higher education responses to recent challenges” “why we need to provide quality higher education to people suffering from emergencies” and “Our responsibilities and measures to be taken as leaders and administrators of higher education”.

Saying that many universities in the world have switched to distance education in March 2020, and that digitalization in education has accelerated, Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar said, “In addition to the pandemic, there is forced migration around the world due to various reasons such as war, political instability, military conflicts, natural disasters, hunger and economic conditions. According to the latest data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the total number of people forced to leave their homes is 89.3 million by the end of 2021. In 2012, 1 out of 167 people in the world was a migrant/refugee, today this figure has increased to 1 out of 88 people. According to the latest estimate by UNHCR, this number exceeds 100 million people worldwide.”

Stating that problems such as drought and famine due to climate change force people to migrate to other countries, Prof.

Özvar used the phrases below: “According to the World Health Organization (WHO), climate change is the biggest health threat facing humanity. Health professionals around the world are unable to respond to the damage caused by this emerging crisis. According to WHO’s estimation, climate change will cause approximately 250 thousand deaths annually due to malnutrition and accompanying diseases between 2030 and 2050.”

Stating that for whatever reason, forced migration causes physical and mental damage especially to children and young people, Özvar said, “According to UNHCR, 30 percent of the world’s population consists of children, while this rate reaches 41 percent among forcibly displaced people. These young people live under the threat of violence and fear, and their education is interrupted. Education plays an important role so that refugee children and youth can have good opportunities in the future. Education is the most important investment not only for individuals but also for societies. As their knowledge and skills increase, these young people will play an important role in making the world a better place.”

Stating that higher education encourages not only global peace, democracy and the development of countries, but also internationalization, Prof. Erol Özvar said, “Culture, knowledge and experience from different geographies improve cooperation around the world. Every talented student; can contribute to science regardless of nationality, skin colour, religion or gender. With education, young generations can have better standards, compete with the world, and be beneficial to their countries and nations of the world.”

Expressing how Turkish higher education has responded to the latest developments, YÖK President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar used the phrases below: “Turkey is currently the country hosting the highest number of refugees in the world, with 4 million refugees it hosts. I would like to talk about what we have done as a country that has managed to absorb the international student

wave in terms of higher education institutions. The Turkish higher education system has become a regional center with its dynamic structure in the global competitive environment. With our unique geographical location, we offer diversity in higher education and host an international community of academicians and students. This diversity, which we are happy with, expands our students' understanding of other cultures and nations."

Mentioning the efforts to meet the higher education needs of the Syrian refugee youth who came to Turkey due to the devastating war, President Özvar reminded the humanitarian aid Turkey provides to all over the world, "According to the 2022 Global Humanitarian Aid Report prepared by the United Kingdom-based Development Initiatives, Turkey; In 2021, it was recorded as the country that provided the most humanitarian aid in the world, as a percentage of gross national income. These aids do not include the refugees we host in our lands. It is a fact that Turkey manages the wave of immigration from Syria very well in terms of higher education. As our President, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has always said, wherever there is an oppressed or needy victim in the world, we stand by them with all our might. Likewise, after the events in Ukraine, we took action quickly. In March 2022, I announced that our door is open to all scientists who seek a safe harbour from Ukraine or any other country and wish to pursue their scientific activities in peace. We offered Ukrainian academicians the opportunity to work at our state universities so that they could do their unfinished research. Foreign students studying at various schools in Ukraine and meeting certain conditions can also apply to our universities." uttered his words.

In his speech, "Why should we provide quality higher education for people affected by emergencies?" and "What are our responsibilities as higher education leaders and administrators in these turbulent times and what measures should be taken?" Continuing by answering his questions, Prof. Dr. Özvar said, "In today's world, it is a must to be at least a high school graduate. Individuals who have not completed high school are at a disadvantage compared to their university graduate peers, not only in business life but also in social relations. According to many studies, there are some critical issues that affect the access and continuation of higher education age youth affected by emergencies. The first of these is the lack of orientation. In other words, refugee students do not have enough information about the higher education system of the country they come from. Secondly, they may not know the language of the country they migrated to, or they may encounter various difficulties while learning this language." Stating that the researches show that students can experience trauma due to the process they go through and that they can be exposed to negative attitudes and behaviors in the country they come from, Prof. Özvar expressed the phrases below: "So what are our responsibilities at this point and what precautions should we take? Quality education is perhaps the only opportunity immigrants have for a good life. With quality education, immigrants can integrate more easily

with the host society. For this and many other benefits and opportunities, host countries need to follow more effective and active policies for displaced youth to access higher education. In addition, more effective studies should be conducted on immigrant youth about the higher education application system and admission processes in order to eliminate the lack of orientation. These young people should be given psychosocial support and opportunities to improve their language skills, and cooperation should be made with national and international organizations such as the UN and the Red Cross to increase their access to higher education."

Stating that although the right to education, which is a basic human right, is guaranteed by international conventions, there are many young people and children who cannot access this right for many reasons, Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar made the following statements in his speech:

Expressing that the origin of the word "dialogue" comes from the Greek word "diálogos", President of the Turkish Higher Education Council Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar drew attention to the importance of dialogue and stated that this method should never be abandoned.

Starting his speech by talking about the historical developments of the two university associations BUA and BSUN, of which he is the term president, Prof. Pericles Mitkas stated that the meetings and studies of the two associations made a regional contribution to the United Nations' 2030-Sustainable Development Vision.

Noting that despite the differences in geography, there are similar problems all over the world, Prof. Pericles Mitkas said that the role of universities is to produce permanent solutions to these common problems. Stating that the pandemic process experienced in 2020 affected education as well as in all sectors, Mitkas expressed that the problems have become a spiral with the financial crisis, war and energy crisis experienced one after the other.

Stating that universities are the solution centers of this problem spiral, Prof. Mitkas indicated that all problems can be solved thanks to scientific studies, public-industry-university cooperation, cultural interaction, innovation, contributing to economic development, producing solutions to social problems, academic freedom, digitalization, Erasmus and other international cooperation and mobility, universities expanding their networks in accordance with national and regional purposes.

Drawing attention to the importance of lifelong learning programs and multidisciplinary studies in higher education, Prof. Pericles Mitkas concluded his speech by emphasizing the necessity of universities to show their leadership and response in the pandemic, digitalization as well in wars and crises.

With the panel chaired by Prof. Romiță Iucu at the University of Bucharest, the first day of the Dialogue and Cooperation Congress in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region, which has historical importance for the region, came to an end.

“THE CONGRESS OF DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION IN THE BALKANS AND THE BLACK SEA REGION” CONTINUED WITH PANELS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PERMANENT PEACE

The congress, which hosted the important universities of the countries bordering the Balkans and the Black Sea, as well as the important names of academia, diplomacy, bureaucracy and the intelligentsia, continued with scientific sessions. The

academicians and the researchers who are experts in their fields expressed their suggestions for solutions to the problems experienced in 7 separate simultaneous sessions.

The Second Day Started with the Invited Speaker Prof. Rick Fawn...



In the first session of the second day, Prof. Rick Fawn from St. Andrews University made evaluations at the “The Conference of Restarting Dialogue and Cooperation in the Black Sea and the Balkan Region”. In the session chaired by Prof. Dragoş Aligică from the University of Bucharest, Prof. Rick Fawn said that long-term projects were needed to solve the problems. He said that these projects should be based on diplomacy with mutual respect and understanding.

Prof. Fawn, Prof. Fawn, claiming that there was a great change in the world with the collapse of the Soviet Union, stated that concrete steps should be taken in order not to keep peace in discourse, and also expressed the need for think-tanks and universities to undertake important missions at this point.

Sustainable Development in the Balkans and the Black Sea was discussed...

In the second session of the day, “The Conference of Sustainable Development in the Black Sea and the Balkan Region” was held under the chairmanship of Prof. Pericles Mitkas, the President of the Greek Higher Education Institution. The first speaker of the session, Nicolaos Theodossiou, the President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, emphasized the importance of coordinated and solution-oriented work for the solution of regional problems.

Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization Lazăr Comănescu, expressing that the energy crisis stands as the biggest problem in front of sustainable development, stated that the Climate Change Agreement signed in Paris in 2017 failed with a pandemic in 2020 and a war in 2022 and therefore he expressed the need for re-evaluation of this agreement with new arguments.

Romanian Prime Minister Advisor and a famous economist László Borbély, stating that the solution of any problem today is only possible with the action of the political authorities, drew attention to the necessity of separating the issues such as social interaction and public-industry cooperation, which should be guided by universities, from the centralized structure.



The Sessions Continued Simultaneously

The afternoon sessions of the second day continued simultaneously. Cosmin Ghiță, the General Manager of NuclearElectrica, one of the leading companies in Romania in the field of energy, gave a speech in the parallel session on “Energy and Sustainable Development in the Black Sea Region” chaired by Prof. Radu Dudău from the University of Bucharest. In his speech, by expressing that nuclear energy and energy security have become an important issue today, he drew attention to the importance of clean energy and nuclear energy.

Prof. Silviu Nate from Lucian Blaga-Sibiu University, giving a speech in the same session, said that it is being worked on the solutions that will bring the East and the West together on the

basis of energy, in the environment created by the pandemic and the war.

Vice-Chancellor of Boğaziçi University Prof. Gürkan Kumbaroğlu, giving a speech in the parallel session on “Fake News, Propaganda and Other Social Challenges” chaired by Bogdan Nicolae, said that especially the Black Sea and its surroundings have gained great importance in terms of cheap energy. Prof. Kumbaroğlu stated that the studies to make the natural gas available in the Black Sea Region in Turkey for use are being continued, and that they also have carried out hydrogen studies at Boğaziçi University. The parallel sessions ended with question and answer sections.



The Importance of University Networks and Unions was Discussed in the Round Table Meeting...

In the Round Table Meeting titled the Role of Networks and Unions in Academic Collaboration, the importance of exchange programs was highlighted.

CIVIS Representative Romita Iucu, giving a speech in the meeting chaired by Prof. Luciano Saso, the President of European Capital Universities Network, talked about their fields of activity by saying that they are operating in 6 countries as of now.

President of the CIVIS Student Council Angela Petre, talking about the role of students in European universities, stated that the active participation of students in decision-making mechanisms, projects and activities enables them to grow up as well-equipped individuals.

Mihai Paunescu, expressing that online scientific meetings, research projects and post-doctoral mobility are their focal points as the European Social Sciences University, stated that they are not only limited to Europe, but also carry out studies

oriented capacity building with the whole world.

UNITA Representative Irina Macsinga, telling that they carry out projects with different regions in the world in the fields of language education and educational research, stated that the most important thing they have learned from their experiences is that students, academic staff and administrative staff can work efficiently and in harmony for success.

EPICUR Representative Nicolaos Theodossiou, expressing that they have been working with 8 universities in 6 countries of Europe with 307 thousand students, 40 thousand staff, 118 faculties and 156 research groups since 2019, stated that they have made attempts for R&D programs, networking between European universities, innovative methods in education and training and carrying out joint studies with the cooperation of civil society and researchers.



The Last Sessions of the Day were Held Simultaneously...

The last sessions of the second day of the congress were held simultaneously. The second day ended after the “Internationalization of Universities” session, which was held simultaneously with the “Human Security Education” session chaired by SNSPA University Rector Prof. Remus Pricopie.

Former Minister of Education of Lithuania Gintaras, giving a speech in the session of “Internationalization of Universities” chaired by Bucharest University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Mugur Zlotea, stated that the quality of education can be increased with internationalization.

Vice-Chancellor of Boğaziçi University Rector Prof. Gürkan Kumbaroğlu, stating that Boğaziçi University has taken rapid steps in internationalization from the first moment due to its founding characteristics, talked about the university’s bilateral cooperation.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Shefik Shehu, starting his speech by giving information about Tetova University, said that they are ready to develop bilateral cooperation in order to ensure

internationalization on issues such as climate change, clean energy and R&D.

West Timișoara University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Catalina Ancuta, emphasizing that they act with a certain strategy in internationalization, pointed out that the balance that has deteriorated in favor of developed countries in the change in higher education can be achieved through internationalization.

SNSPA Vice-Chancellor Crina Radulescu, talking about the student profile in their university, said that they attach great importance to exchange programs, especially the Erasmus Student Mobility program.

Ukraine Zaporizhzhia National Polytechnic University Rector Advisor Sergey Beylikov, saying that it was a very difficult feeling for him to talk about internationalization as a country in the war, gave information about the history of the university and the city where it was founded. He stated that while they were preparing to host many international events after the pandemic, they had to postpone all their work due to the war.



PROF. DR. İBRAHİM DİNÇER, WHO HAS PARTICIPATED IN THE CONGRESS OF DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION IN THE BALKANS AND THE BLACK SEA REGION, DREW ATTENTION TO HYDROGEN ENERGY



The Congress of Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region, which brings together the important universities of the countries bordering the Balkans and the Black Sea, hosted a world-famous name in the field of clean energy and hydrogen. President of the Hydrogen Technologies Association and Ontario Technology University Faculty Member Prof. Dr. İbrahim Dinçer, participating in the meeting with the initiatives of Trakya University, drew attention to the future of hydrogen energy.

Prof. Dr. İbrahim Dinçer, recognized as an authority all over the world with his studies in the field of clean energy and hydrogen energy, participated in the “The Congress of Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region”, which was held in cooperation with the Balkan Universities Association (BUA) and the Black Sea Universities Association (BSUN). Prof. Dr. İbrahim Dinçer, giving a speech in the session titled Energy and Sustainable Development in the Black Sea region, said, “For sustainable development; energy, education, environment and economy have come into prominence. Clean energy and clean hydrogen will create clean food and clean water. The road to hydrogen energy will be through the transition from fossil fuels that pollute our world to clean fuels.”

Prof. Dinçer, conveying the difference between the use of fossil fuels and hydrogen comparatively, said that hydrogen was cheaper and more efficient. Dinçer, emphasizing that the need for clean energy in the world was increasing day by day, said, “Turkey continues its research for clean energy with its own resources in the Black Sea Region as well. The use of clean energy will reduce carbon emissions over time. Clean energy and clean hydrogen are the road to sustainability, and without these two, it will be very difficult to achieve sustainability.”

THE WORKSHOP OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT OFFICES

In the congress, hosted by Bucharest University and organized in cooperation with the Balkan Universities Association (BUA), and the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN), a workshop that brought the project office officials of the universities together was held. The idea of strengthening the cooperation of universities in the Balkans was expressed by all participants in the workshop, where the academics of BUA left their marks with their projects and cooperation proposals.

The workshop was moderated by Trakya University Technology Transfer Application and Research Center Director Prof. Dr. Muharrem Tolga Sakallı and was attended by Inst. Burcu Ören Özer from the same center, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Rector Prof. Dr. Adem Korkmaz, the Rector Advisor Assist. Prof. Mustafa Kılınç, International Relations Coordinator Assoc. Prof. Ali Karakaş, Kırklareli University International Relations Coordinator Assoc. Prof. Mehmet Fatih Çömlekçi, Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University International Relations

Application and Research Center Director Assist Prof. Hasan Selçuk Eti, Tetova State University Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Şefik Shehu, Prof. Dr. Dwight Read from University of California, Prof. Dr. Fadwa el Guindi retired from Qatar University, Gina Kafedzhian from Plovdiv Academy of Art, University of Ruse Vice-Rector Assoc. Prof. Desislava Atanasova, Assoc. Prof. Manuella Kadar from December 1, 1918 Alba Lulia University and Alina Christovici, the International Relations Coordinator of the University of Bucharest.

Possible projects were discussed in the event, which started with the institution officials giving information about the projects they have carried out. The ideas on digitalization, innovation, educational technologies, university-industry cooperation, culture and art events, educational technologies, media, environment, etc. were exchanged. Future-oriented regional collaborations and joint project studies were discussed in the workshop.

LEADING UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATIONS OF EUROPE CAME TOGETHER ON THE LAST DAY OF THE CONGRESS ON DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION IN THE BALKANS AND BLACK SEA REGION.



BUA Secretary General Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu gave important messages at the meeting where the leading universities and university associations of Europe came together on the last day of the Congress on Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and Black Sea Region.

Speaking at the meeting, chaired by Vice-Rector Prof. Sorin Costreie from Bucharest University, President of the European University Association and Belgrade University Rector Prof. Dr. Ivanka Popovic said that today's academics are not only expected to conduct scientific research, but also to develop relationships with other universities and academics. Expressing that they have some responsibilities as universities, Prof. Popovic stated that it is necessary to work together to solve the problems.

Stating that they had great experiences from the meetings that brought scientists from different disciplines together, Bucharest University Rector Prof. Marian Preda said that they have new platforms to evaluate the new opportunities that have arisen and will arise. Expressing that they think the same ideas even though they speak different languages, Prof. Preda stated that they should focus on all universities in the world, not just Western Europe or America.

Vice-Rector of Rome Sapienza University and President of the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA) Prof. Luciano Saso said that cooperation between universities and university associations will definitely have successful results

on the basis of trust and sincerity.

Stating that BSUN is an important union for the region and Europe, President Prof. Karin Markides pointed out that the union should have more members in terms of coverage, and said that the pandemic and the subsequent war situation hindered its work. Stating that the processes experienced draw attention to the importance of working together and cooperation, Prof. Markides emphasized the importance of realizing joint projects by focusing on the solution of problems.

Expressing his belief that regional and global development of cooperation will improve education and increase quality, BUA Term President and Former Rector of Bucharest University Prof. Mircea Dumitru stated that the region gave them a historical mission and called for cooperation from all universities.

Starting his speech by talking about the establishment and development stages of the Association, Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu said, "As the Association, we have completed the development phase by preparing a very good regulation. We are hosting our general assembly, which we have not been able to hold for two years due to the pandemic, hosted by the University of Bucharest. We got involved to the Black Sea Universities Network with Secretary General Prof. Eden Mamut's offer. Later, as the secretaries general of the two unions, we put forward the idea of holding a joint congress and this idea was accepted by the boards of directors. For the holding

of this comprehensive meeting, I thank to BUA Term President Prof. Dr. Mircea Dumitru, Bucharest University Rector Prof. Dr. Marian Preda, Vice-Rector Prof. Sorin Costreie, BSUN Term President Prof. Dr. Karin Markides and Secretary General Prof. Dr. Eden Mamut. With their support, we have engaged the two unions.”

Talking about his work as BUA Secretary General and Permanent Board Member, Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu said, “We touch all universities in the Balkan geography. We visit their places and meet with the rectors and officials. I’m in the field myself. Our union, which we started with 17 universities, will reach 90 members today. Maybe we are small one by one, but when we come together, we become a strong union. As Union member universities, we have 1 million 270 thousand students and more than 73 thousand academicians. The Black Sea and the Balkans are a fragile region with problems. As Turkey, we experienced the Syria and Iraq crises, and now we are experiencing the Ukraine-Russia crisis. Therefore, the stress in the region increased. Unfortunately, there are countries that see the countries of the region as pawns to be sacrificed. Although these countries want the turmoil and chaos in the region to continue, we, as the people of the region, do not want more problems, we want peace.”

Stating that universities and university unions have gained great importance as the institutions most affected by the situation in the region, Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu said, “The union of the

Balkan Universities Association and the Black Sea Universities Network has increased our power of influence. In addition to these two unions, many unions, especially the European University Association, came together. In the European Universities Association, of which we are also a member, we are the country with the most members after Germany with 65 universities. Unfortunately, the representation of the Balkan region and Turkey in the European University Association is not at the desired level. BUA and the European University Association can work together to eliminate this situation and respond more quickly to the demands of the region.”

Rector Tabakoğlu pointed out that although the Cross-Border European Union projects are known, many universities have weak project writing and development skills, Rector Tabakoğlu said, “At this point, as BUA, we can work together with the European University Association (EUA) on projects about environment, education and energy that will increase the quality of the universities in the region. Again, as BUA, we can provide representation of regional universities within the EUA. It would be meaningful for the European University Association to take this step, especially after the Ukraine-Russia crisis.”

Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu emphasized that they will continue to be the hope of regional universities by continuing to develop and grow as the Balkan Universities Association.



THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATIONS WAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE SESSION REGARDING THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE FUTURE OF THE BALKANS

On the last day of “The Congress on Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region” hosted by Bucharest University under the initiatives and leadership of Trakya University, the importance of university associations in sustainability and scientific development was highlighted.

“The Congress on Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region”, jointly organized by the Balkan Universities Association (BUA), of which Trakya University is the Permanent Secretary General and a Permanent Member of the Board of Directors, and the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN), of which Trakya University is also a member, continued with the scientific sessions on the third and the last day. Important discussions and evaluations were made at the “Role of Universities in the Future of the Balkans Panel”, hosted by the University of Bucharest, where the authorized names of the leading universities of the region were among the speakers.

Milla Popovic, who made a speech at the panel chaired by Trakya University Retired Lecturer Prof. Dr. Hilmi İbar, shared information about her intercultural studies in the field of environment and equality of opportunity.



Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu started his presentation with the verses of the great Turkish poet and mystic Yunus Emre, “Come, let’s meet / Let’s make things easy / Let’s love and be loved / The world will not be left to anyone”. He continued that “Everything can be carried out easily and quickly when people meet face to face, hearts are touched, and a sense of trust is created. The best example of this is BUA. Our Association, which was founded in 2008 and held its first meeting in 2014 with 17 universities in our University, the second in Sofia, under the chair of Ivan Ilchev, the third in Tetovo under the chair of Vulnet Ameti, and the fourth in Thessaloniki under the chair of Pericles Mitkas, gathered in ever-growing and developing meetings. Although we postponed our fifth meeting due to the pandemic, we continued our work. Our contacts with the University of Bucharest continued everlastingly.”

Stating that they carried out a historical event hosted by Bucharest University, Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu said, “I find it meaningful that the highest authorities of the Romanian state, the heads of higher education in Turkey and Greece, and many university rectors in the region come together in this meeting. We took part in this historical meeting with a large delegation led by our Council of Higher Education President from our country. As a good bond was formed between the two



unions, contacts and cooperation ideas arose between hundreds of universities. I would like to thank all the institutions and organizations involved here.”

Rector Tabakoğlu, who shared the image of the commemorative stamp printed for the Second Balkan Conference convened in Istanbul in 1931 with the initiatives of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, ended his speech with the following sentences “One of the roots of the olive tree, which is used on this stamp and symbolizes peace, is in Istanbul, one in Sofia, one in Athens, one in Belgrade and one in Bucharest. This is what this picture tells us ‘We are stronger together’. I find it very meaningful that we are gathered here 91 years after that conference. This bridge of friendship was collapsed by the Second World War, but perhaps it can be rebuilt after the Russia-Ukrainian War as a result of historical irony. I think that the state, private sector and academia play a very important role in the management of the Balkan countries. Countries that give importance to the balance between government, private sector and academia will be successful. Sometimes the value of academia can be underestimated. University associations remind us of this value. At this point, the Balkan Universities Union implements studies and projects under the leadership of Trakya University. As academics, it will be easier for us to meet at the center of science and reason and solve problems peacefully.”

Turkish scientist and New York Tirana University Rector Prof. Dr. Erkan Erdemir pointed out the need for institutions to act jointly in order to develop universities, increase their project-making capabilities and ensure sustainable development, and stated that universities also play a major role in cultural interaction.



Stating that they are happy to have students from different cultures and countries, even though they are a small university, Agricultural University - Plovdiv Rector Prof. Dr. Hristina Yancheva drew attention to the importance of agriculture in this challenging period of time that the world has been going thorough.

Talking about the history, development and studies of Tuzla University, Vice-Rector Prof. Jasmin Suljagic stated that the successful results to be obtained by working together will serve the sustainable development of the region.



The panel ended with the general evaluation of BUA Term President and Former Rector of Bucharest University, Prof. Dr. Mircea Dumitru.



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF BALKAN UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION (BUA) WAS HELD IN THE HISTORICAL MEETING

The General Assembly of BUA was held at the Congress on Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and Black Sea Region. Member universities and new candidates participated in the General Assembly of BUA, of which Trakya University is the Permanent Secretary General and Member of Board. The assembly was chaired by Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, the Rector of Trakya University, Prof. Mircea Dimitru, the BUA Term President, and Prof. Dr. Marian Preda, the Rector of University of Bucharest. The candidates' demands were evaluated, and the future projection of the association was planned.

The applications to BUA by Istinye University, Istanbul Medeniyet University, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Bulgaria Sofia Telecommunication and Postal University, Bosnia-Herzegovina Mostar University, Romania Galati University, Kosovo Ferizaj University, Kosovo Iliria Rezonanca Medical University, Bursa Technical University and Bulgarian American University were evaluated. After the candidates introduced their fields of activity and study, they were unanimously accepted to BUA by the members.

Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu talked about Trakya University's works, contacts and projects specific to BUA and then presented the items on the agenda to the member universities for a vote.

Rector Tabakoğlu mentioned that they are working for BUA to be represented by more universities and for increasing its power and influence area with each passing day. He stated, "We continue to contact all universities in the Balkans to expand our association and to develop the region. As Trakya University, we are ready to carry out all duties for the future of the region."

Then Rector Tabakoğlu thanked Prof. Dr. Mircea Dimitru for his devoted work during his presidency, and Prof. Dr. Marian Preda and Prof. Dr. Sorin Costreie for their hospitality and warm welcome. He concluded his speech by wishing good luck to the new term president Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigraphic, the Rector of University of Tuzla (UNTZ) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Dr. Jasmin Suljagic, the Vice-Rector.

University of Tuzla in Bosnia-Herzegovina Has Become the New Term President of the Balkan Universities Association...

After the speech, the handover ceremony was held. Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu presented certificates of appreciation to Prof. Mircea Dimitru, Prof. Dr. Marian Preda, and Prof. Sorin Costreie on behalf of the Association. He handed over the emblem of the Association to Dr. Jasmin Suljagic in the name of the new term president Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigraphic.

The meeting ended with a group photo shoot of the member universities.

Who is Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigraphic?

Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigraphic was born on December 13, 1962, in Loznica. She completed her primary and secondary education in Zvornik. She graduated from UNTZ Faculty of Medicine in 1987 and received her doctorate degree in 2004.

Being a dermatovenerology expert, she worked respectively as Professor of Dermatovenerology and Vice-Dean of Clinical Teaching and Student Affairs at UNTZ Faculty of Medicine, Director of UKC Tuzla

Skin Diseases Clinic, Head of Dermatovenerology Department at TK Ministry of Health, President of Bosnia-Herzegovina Dermatovenerologists Association, and Dean of UNTZ Faculty of Medicine. Since 2017, she has been working as the Rector of UNTZ. As a member of the TK Medical Chamber Professional Development Committee, she has numerous scientific articles and textbooks for students.

University of Tuzla

University of Tuzla (Univerzitet u Tuzli) is a public university located in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Founded in 1958, it is one of the most important universities in Bosnia-Herzegovina today.

It started education as a college in 1958, and it is also included in the equivalence system of universities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Today, it has 13 faculties and a higher education program that complies with the Bologna Criteria.



BRINGING IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS AND NAMES OF THE BALKANS AND THE BLACK SEA REGION TOGETHER, THE CONGRESS ENDED WITH EVALUATIONS AND A FAMILY PHOTO

“The Congress on Dialogue and Cooperation in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region”, which was realized with the initiatives of Trakya University and has a historical significance for the region, ended with an evaluation session and a family photo.

The congress, hosted by Bucharest University and organized in cooperation with the Balkan Universities Association (BUA), of which Trakya University is the Permanent Secretary General and a Permanent Member of the Board of Directors, and the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN), of which Trakya University is a member, hosted important names from the region's politics, diplomacy, bureaucracy and academia. The congress ended with a closing session moderated by the two Secretaries General Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu (BUA) and Prof. Dr. Eden Mamut (BSUN) and the host Bucharest University Rector Prof. Dr. Marian Preda and the Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Sorin Costreie, and a family photo was taken afterwards. The new term president of BUA will be Tuzla University of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Boğaziçi University will preside over the new term of BSUN.

Expressing that they are honored to host an important congress in cooperation with the BUA and the BSUN, Bucharest University Rector Prof. Dr. Marian Preda thanked Trakya University and member universities in the presence of Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, who contributed greatly to this historical event.

Expressing that they are very happy to have organized a historical meeting that hosted the important universities of the Balkans and of the countries with a coast to the Black Sea and important names from the countries of the region, Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu said, “We, as the Balkan Universities Association, are increasing our sphere of influence day by day. In our congress, which hosted hundreds of universities and academicians, we shed

light on the future of the Balkans. At our meeting, where the state, diplomacy and bureaucracy were represented at the highest level, we took the pulse of the region and held important meetings in order to ensure lasting peace and sustainable development in the region.”

Rector Prof. Dr. Tabakoğlu, who emphasized that Turkey is represented by a large delegation under the presidency of the President of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar, said, “Our universities attracted attention in the meetings, where we participated intensively with 12 universities from our country that are members of BUA and with 15 universities that are members of BSUN. We put forward important views and ideas about the present and the future of the region. Our CoHE President did not leave us alone, either. I would like to thank him and the rectors and the representatives of all our universities.”

Stating that the strength of the Association increased by the attendance to the congress of the president, the prime minister and ministers from the host country Romania, and the Turkish CoHE President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar, and the Greek CoHE President Prof. Dr. Pericles Mitkas, Rector Prof. Dr. Tabakoğlu said, “This historical meeting, where Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar and Prof. Dr. Pericles Mitkas gave peace messages, was admirable. Thanks once again to our CoHE President Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar and the Greek CoHE President Prof. Dr. Pericles Mitkas. Our Association will continue its work by growing and developing from now on.”

Wishing both BUA and BSUN to be successful in their new term, Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu said that the close cooperation between BUA and BSUN will continue by getting stronger.

The historical meeting, which was hosted by Bucharest University with the initiatives of Trakya University ended with a family photo.





Balkan Universities Association

BUANEWS



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