

BUANEWS

Balkan Universities Association E- Bulletin

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Balkan Universities Association

The “European Language Label 2021-2022” was awarded to the School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for its innovative methods of language teaching and learning

The School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has been offering Modern Greek language courses to foreigners and expatriates since 1970. It offers courses for special purposes, as well as teacher training seminars. It participates in research projects and educational cooperation programmes with national and international institutions. It also organises examinations for the acquisition of the certificate of proficiency in the Greek language.

The “European Language Label 2021-2022” was awarded to the School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, for the implementation of the project “New without Borders / World in Order”. The European Language Label is a distinction awarded to institutions and individuals who succeed in developing tools and teaching methods that can become good practices and be adopted in language environments other than the ones they have developed.

The award highlights, once again, the good teaching

and learning practices implemented at the School of Modern Greek Language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

More information about the School of Modern Greek Language: <https://smg.web.auth.gr/may2019b/en/>

**International University of Sarajevo****IUS and ITÜ Strengthen Academic Ties with New Double Diploma Programs: Computer Engineering and Bioengineering**

On Friday, January 26, 2024, a delegation from Istanbul Technical University (ITÜ), led by Prof. Dr. İsmail Koyuncu, ITÜ Rector, and accompanied by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kumral, ITÜ Vice-Rector, Prof. Dr. Şule İtir Satoğlu, ITÜ Vice-Rector, Prof. Dr. Ali Tüfekçi, Director of the ITÜ Turkish Music State Conservatory, along with Mr. Adem Dönmez and Mr. Engin Yıldırım, paid a visit to the International University of Sarajevo (IUS). The delegation received a warm welcome from the IUS Rector, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Yıldırım, and IUS Vice-Rector for General Affairs, Assoc. Prof. Muhammed Yasir Göz.

The purpose of the visit was to define the principles and procedures of the Protocol on the Establishment of an International Undergraduate Joint Program in Computer Engineering and Bioengineering between the two universities. Prior to this protocol, IUS and

ITÜ had a Double Diploma Program in four areas of study: Mechanical Engineering, Architecture, Economy, and Electronics and Communication Engineering. The addition of the two new study programs will broaden the options for prospective students interested in Double Diploma Programs at IUS.

These joint study programs combine the best aspects of both partner universities, providing the advantage of studying in both Sarajevo and Istanbul. Upon successful completion of a four-year course of study, graduates are awarded two separate diplomas, one issued by IUS and the other by ITÜ.

We extend an invitation to all ambitious students to seize this opportunity now offered by IUS and enroll in one of the six offered study programs through our established international cooperation.

Excellence in Higher Education: IUS Maintains Best Private University Status in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The January 2024 Webometrics Report once again ranks the International University of Sarajevo (IUS) as the best private university in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This report underscores the University's commitment to pursuing excellence in higher education.

IUS's dedication to academic excellence is evident in its comprehensive approach to education. The university continuously strives to enhance its academic offerings, foster an environment of innovation, and uphold the highest standards of transparency and openness. This commitment has led to notable advancements since the last ranking was announced.

One of the key areas where IUS has made substantial progress is in research and innovation, particularly in renewable energy projects. The university has increased its focus on cutting-edge research, aiming to contribute to global solutions for green energy. These projects not only advance scientific knowledge but also prepare students to become leaders in the field of renewable energy.

Another significant development at IUS is the intro-

duction of new study programs designed to meet the evolving needs of the global job market. These programs offer students diverse educational opportunities, enabling them to acquire the skills and knowledge required for success in various industries.

IUS has also made substantial investments in its infrastructure, enhancing the campus experience for students, faculty, and staff. These improvements include state-of-the-art laboratories, modern classrooms, and upgraded facilities that support both academic and extracurricular activities.

The recognition by Webometrics underscores the university's ongoing efforts to increase its visibility on a global scale. IUS has implemented strategies to enhance its online presence, making its academic resources, research findings, and institutional information more accessible to a broader audience.

As IUS continues to grow and evolve, it remains dedicated to shaping the future of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond.



Prof. Dr. İbrahim Saraçoğlu's Health and Life Presentation at İstinye University Generates Excitement!

Prof. Dr. İbrahim Saraçoğlu's captivating presentation on health and wellness at İstinye University left the audience buzzing. Held on February 15, 2024, at the university's EU Campus, the event drew a large crowd eager to hear Saraçoğlu's expert insights.

From practical tips for healthy living to fascinating historical anecdotes and herbal remedies, Saraçoğlu's talk offered a refreshing perspective. Attendees, including university administrators and faculty, were actively engaged in discussions and eager to learn more. The presentation covered a wide range of topics, from animal behavior to plant intelligence, sparking curiosity and inspiring further research. Saraçoğlu's ability to connect seemingly unrelated fields like nature, science, and history made the presentation truly unique. The event was a testament to the university's commitment to promoting wellness and fostering a love of learning.



"5 Days, 5 Sectors: Women in the Workforce Workshop" Held at İstinye University

İstinye University (İSÜ) hosted the "5 Days, 5 Sectors: Women in the Workforce Workshop" between March 4-8 at the İSÜ Valley campus. Leading women from the textile, automotive, energy, media, and pharmaceutical industries shared their work experiences with students.

The workshop highlighted the automotive industry's significantly low female employment rate of only 2%. It was projected that by 2030, the proportion of women working in the automotive sector would increase to 30%.

Organized with the aim of contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5, "Gender Equality," and focusing on women's presence in the workforce, the "5 Days, 5 Sectors: Women in the Workforce Workshop" took place between March 4-8 at İstinye University (İSÜ) Valley campus. Organized in collaboration with ISUSEM-EPAM, ISUGender ISUMED -ISUKök, the Entrepreneurial Engineers Club, Quantum Dynamic Club, Industrial Engineering Club, Energy and Engineering Club, Networking

Club, and ISUPA, the event was planned as a series of sectoral workshops, with each day dedicated to a different sector.

Expert women speakers from the textile, automotive, energy, media, and pharmaceutical industries met with students. Among the speakers, Associate Professor Dr. Ayfer Ustabaş, Director of the Center for Economic and Political Research (EPAM), Subaru Marketing Manager Selin Şahiniz, and Doğuş Automotive Corporate Communication, Brand, and Sustainability Director Ebru Kantoğlu provided information on the automotive industry and women's employment in this sector.

Key Points from the Workshop:

- The education and banking sectors have the highest rates of female employment.
- The automotive sector has a female employment rate of only 2% and a significant lack of female leaders.
- According to the World Economic Forum's

2023 report, Turkey ranks 129th out of 144 countries in terms of women's economic participation and opportunities.

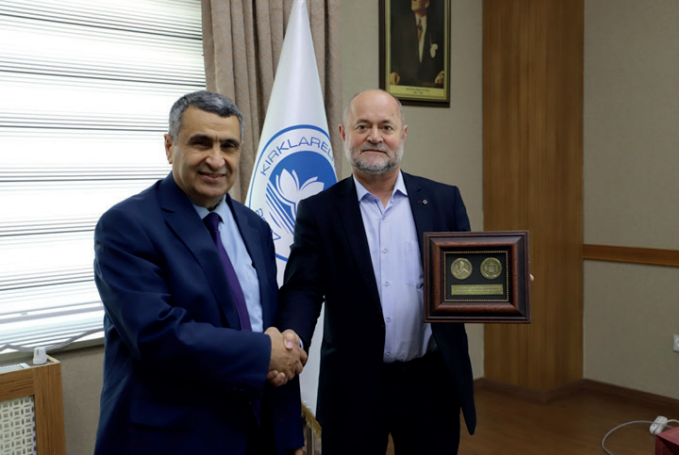
- Women are an essential force for the future of the automotive world.
- The automotive industry aims to increase the proportion of women working in the sector to 30% by 2030.



Meeting with the University of Economics Varna/ Bulgaria

Vice-Rector of the Bulgarian Varna University of Economics Svilen Stalarov and Head of the Tourism Department and Co-President of the Varna Tourism Chamber, Prof. Dr. Stoyan Marinov, visited our university on Thursday, March 21, 2024, and met with our Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Ünal Çağlar.

During the meeting held in the Rectorate Board of Directors Hall with the participation of our university's Tourism Faculty member Prof. Dr. Mustafa Cevdet Altunel, International Relations Office Coordinator Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Fatih Çömlekçi, Tourism Faculty member Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nilüfer Vatansever Toylan, Erasmus Coordinator Deputy Rüveyda Öztürk and Project Development and Coordination Office Head Çiğdem Ovacı Beji, consultations were held on the issues of making an Erasmus Agreement in some departments of both universities and establishing partnerships in various European Union projects.

**Orientation Seminar for International Students**

Kırklareli University and the Provincial Immigration Administration held an information and orientation meeting for our international students on January 3, 2024. The students were informed and guided about the residence permit processes before and after graduation. Representatives of the Immigration Administration, Foreign Student Office officials, and the coordinator of the International Relations Office were also present at the meeting.



Rector, Prof. Dimitar Dimitrov, says Thank you to students on International Thank-you day

Today, 23.1.2024, in observation of International Thank-you day, Rector prof. Dimitar Dimitrov, PhD met with UVT students. Prof. Dimitar Dimitrov greeted the students, pointing out that what makes an university are its students, lecturers, staff, halls and auditoriums, and not least the school spirit. "I want to thank you today that you are so driven, motivated and knowledgeable! Thank you that by the erudition you present on conferences, seminars, contests and sports competitions, by your participation in charity events and University initiatives, you defend the authority and good name of the University of Veliko Tarnovo as an educational centre where the future of our country learns and grows. You are an example to all young people, not only St. Cyril and St. Methodius UVT students, but all students in Bulgaria. Your exam session will begin soon so I wish you that you receive excellent marks all around, I wish you a health and much success in 2024", the Rector said. On their part, the

students thanked prof. Dimitar Dimitrov and presented him an honorary diploma/letter/certificate on behalf of the student body for his personal support and the good conditions provided by the rector's office for their education at the University of Veliko Tarnovo.



St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo has recently signed the MCU 2020

St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo has recently signed the MCU 2020, confirming its commitment to promoting academic autonomy, social responsibility and university values.

Become part of a community engaged with continuously improving the future of higher education by signing the 2020 MCU. You can apply here: <https://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum/mcu2020>

#MCU2020 #ResponsibleUniversities #Academic-Freedom



UVT once again receives prestigious award

The official ceremony of the awards for Bulgaria's best universities was held in Sofia.

The Rector prof. Dimitar Dimitrov, PhD, received the special award for First place for the University of Veliko Tarnovo for 2023 for the fields of "History and archaeology", "Philology", "Pedagogy", "Fine arts", "Religion and Theology" and "Theory and Management of Education" for any university outside Sofia.



Cooperation Agreement with Businesses in the Field of Scientific Research

The University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (UASF) has signed cooperation agreements with twelve businesses in the region. The agreements are aimed at deepening the cooperation between UASF and businesses.

The Rector of UASF, Prof. Dr. Agron Bajraktari thanked the business representatives for the cooperation so far, as well as their willingness to deepen the cooperation in the field of scientific research. Among other things, the Rector emphasized the role and importance of the university's cooperation with business, where the academic staff and students can carry out research and practice to benefit from the skills that are necessary for the labor market.

"This project was funded through a grant from the

American Embassy in Pristina. The opinions, conclusions and recommendations expressed here are those of the Author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of State."



Functionalization of the wireless network, supported by the Kosovo Research and Education Network (KREN)

The functionalization of the wireless network has marked an important step in the infrastructure of the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj. This project was carried out in close cooperation between KREN, UASF staff and students of the Study Program Applied Informatics at the Faculty of Engineering and Informatics.

In the first phase of the project, testing of network cables, repair of breakdowns and installation of 10 WAP devices was done by four students of UASF, Applied Informatics Study Program.

In the second phase, the company contracted by

KREN laid the network cables for these devices and installed them, making WiFi Internet functional in most of the campus.

Academic and administrative staff, students and visitors now have easy access to the wireless network anywhere on campus, using a QR code to connect their devices.

The students involved in the project are:
Valdrin Hasallari, Informatics and Applications
Agron Haziri, Informatics and Applications
Cendrim Qalaj, Informatics and Applications
Granit Sejfiu, IT and Applications

'Murat Kamil Tırpancı Library' Opened with a Ceremony at Tekirdağ NKU

The official opening ceremony of 'Murat Kamil Tırpancı Library', the new library of Tekirdağ Namik Kemal University, was held.

Prof. Dr. Mümin ŞAHİN and his wife Selda ŞAHİN, Nazan TIRPANCI, the wife of the late Murat Kamil TIRPANCI and their son Ahmet Osman TIRPANCI, the provincial and University protocol and the Rectors of Kırklareli and Trakya Universities, Işık AHMET, the wife of the late Dr. Sadık AHMET, Dr. Lecturer Mustafa ARAS, Secretary General of the Union of Thracian Universities (TUB), Dr. Lecturer. Prof. Dr. Mustafa ARAS, President of the Bulgarian Supreme Islamic Council Vedat AHMET, Elected Mufti of Komotini İbrahim ŞERİF, Elected Mufti of Xanthi Mustafa TRAMPA, NGO Representatives, members of the press, academic and administrative staff and students.

Speaking at the ceremony, which started with a moment of silence and the reading of the National Anthem, Prof. Dr. Mustafa ŞENTOP said that he was touched that the name of his relative, the late Secretary General Murat Kamil TIRPANCI, was given to the Library of our University with the decision of the University Senate. Prof. Dr. ŞENTOP stated that libraries should provide 24/7 service in order to fully fulfill their functions, shared examples from his own academic life on the subject and expressed his satisfaction that Tekirdağ Namik Kemal University Murat Kamil Tırpancı Library is open 24/7.

Rector of our University Prof. Dr. Mümin ŞAHİN started his speech by wishing God's mercy to the late Murat Kamil TIRPANCI and condolences to his family and loved ones and said, "Universities are the most important centers of knowledge production and dissemination. Libraries play a vital role in this knowledge production and dissemination. Libraries are not only places where books are stored, but also important institutions that provide students, academics and all researchers with the opportunity to find information and resources, conduct research and learn. Murat Kâmil Tırpancı Library was designed and put into service with an area of 12,000 square meters and a capacity to serve 2,000 library users 24/7. It houses more than 74,000 printed books, more than 50,000 e-jour-

nals, more than 4,100 theses, 11,500 open archive publications and more than 650 periodicals. With its modern and functional design, it aims to provide the best working environment for our students and academics."

Rector Prof. Dr. ŞAHİN thanked those who contributed and attended to the ceremony and who contributed to the construction of Murat Kamil Tırpancı Library and concluded his words as "I wish that Murat Kâmil Tırpancı Library will be beneficial to Tekirdağ Namik Kemal University and all of Tekirdağ".

After the opening speeches, Prof. Dr. Mustafa ŞENTOP and Prof. Dr. Mümin ŞAHİN, Nazan TIRPANCI and Osman TIRPANCI presented plaques to the meaning and importance of the day.

After the prayer recited by Prof. Dr. Hasan KESKİN, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, the ribbon cutting ceremony started. The program ended with the guests visiting the Library building.



'Religious Situation of Western Thrace Turks in Bulgaria and Greece' Panel was held at Tekirdağ NKU

Within the scope of the activities of the Union of Thracian Universities (TUB), the panel on 'Religious Situation of Western Thrace Turks in Bulgaria and Greece' was held at Tekirdağ Namik Kemal University. The event held at Tekirdağ NKU Rectorate Conference Hall was attended by 29th President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Prof. Dr. Mustafa ŞENTOP, Rector of our University and TÜB Term President Prof. Dr. Mümin ŞAHİN and his wife Selda ŞAHİN, provincial and university protocol and Rectors of Kırklareli and Thrace Universities, wife of the late Dr. Sadık AHMET Işık AHMET, President of the Bulgarian Supreme Islamic Council Vedat AHMET, Elected Mufti of Komotini İbrahim ŞERİF, Elected Mufti of Xanthi Mustafa TRAMPA, NGO representatives, members of the press, academic and administrative staff and students.

Speaking at the ceremony that began with a moment of silence and the singing of our national anthem, Prof. Dr. Mustafa ŞENTOP touched upon the history of the concept of 'Religion' with reference to the meaning and importance of the panel titled 'Religious Status of the Turks of Western Thrace in Bulgaria and Greece' and shared his thoughts on the religious status of the Turks who remained in the region after the Ottoman withdrawal from the Balkans.

Rector of Tekirdağ Namik Kemal University, Prof. Dr. Mümin ŞAHİN expressed that "Tekirdağ Namik Kemal University attaches particular importance to the Balkans and Western Thrace. We have approximately 2,300 international students at our university. Approximately 1,000 of them come to our university from the Balkan countries and Western Thrace. As a Balkan University, a Rumelia University and also a member of the Balkan Universities Association, this quota is increasing day by day. The Balkans and Rumelia are among the regions where our kinsmen live most densely. We will continue to strengthen our relations even further. As Tekirdağ Namik Kemal University, we attach great importance to the panel titled 'Religious Status of the Turks of Western Thrace in Bulgaria and Greece' organized within the scope of the Thrace Universities Union, of which we are the Term President, and the Thrace Universities Union

is one of the most hardworking University Unions in our country in terms of its activities."

Rector Prof. Dr. ŞAHİN stated that the aim of the panel is to address the problems related to the religious situation of the Western Thrace Turks of Bulgaria and Greece in all aspects and to offer solutions and concluded his words as "I would like to thank my Speaker Prof. Dr. Halit EREN, Moderator Prof. Dr. Halit EREN and everyone who contributed".

After the opening speeches, under the moderation of Prof. Dr. Halit EREN, faculty member of the Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Sciences of our University, Vedat AHMET, President of the Supreme Islamic Council of Bulgaria, İbrahim ŞERİF, Elected Mufti of Komotini and Mustafa TRAMPA, Elected Mufti of Xanthi, shared comprehensive information about the religious situation of the Turks of Western Thrace in Bulgaria and Greece. The panel ended with a group photo session.



MEANINGFUL VISIT FROM THE DELEGATION OF PROF. DR. ASEN ZLATAROV UNIVERSITY TO TRAKYA UNIVERSITY

Prof. Dr. Hristo Stoyanov Bozov, Rector of Asen Zlatarov University, Prof. Dr. Hristo Stoyanov Bozov, Vice - Rectors Prof. Dr. Irena Georgieva Markovska, Prof. Dr. Sevdalina Hristova Turmanova, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svetlana Dimitrova Jeleva and Krasimir Dimitrov Georgiev, and Head of the National and International Relations and Public Relations Unit Prof. Dr. Stoyanka Petkova Georgieva, Faculty Member Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hyusein Tursunov Yemendzhiev and Translator Shenay Sunay Sadak Afli visited Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu.

During the visit, Trakya University Vice Rectors Prof. Dr. Osman Nuri Hatipoğlu, Prof. Dr. Metin Aydoğdu, Director of Foreign Relations Application and Research Lecturer Dr. Rifat Gürgendereli, Corporate Communication Coordinator Lecturer Dr. Alperen Karapınar, Lecturer from the Foreign Relations Application and Research Center Lecturer Nurgül Sarsılmaz and Lecturer Burcu Ören Özen from the Foreign Relations Application and Research Center and Lecturer from the Technology Transfer Application and Research Center Yağmur Dublen Göksu were present. The possible collaborations between the two institutions were discussed during the visit.

Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu started his speech by congratulating Prof. Dr. Hristo Stoyanov Bozov, who was newly appointed as the Rector of Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University, and emphasized that many bilateral agreements have been signed between the two universities from past to present and that they have solid ties in this sense. Tabakoğlu also expressed his gratitude to Bozov and the delegation for their kind visit saying, "The best example of cooperation between the two universities is the Blue Growth project with a budget of 3.3 million, which they are among the stakeholders, and we aim to implement new projects that we will work in coordination, just like this big project that we have concluded in such harmony.

Bozov remarked, "With the strength we get from the past, we can realize important collaborations for the future." and expressed his gratitude to Tabakoğlu for his hospitality.

During the visit, the two universities exchanged ide-

as on the exchange of students and academics, joint projects in the fields of health, artificial intelligence, cyber security, environment, and clean technology, benefiting from the European Union Project or Cross-Border Cooperation in the Black Sea Basin projects, organizing a joint symposium and publishing a newsletter. Afterward, a bilateral cooperation agreement was signed between the two universities based on joint scientific studies and student/academic exchange. The agreement covers education, research, and other academic activities as well as cultural cooperation including student and academician exchange programs, and internship opportunities in addition to educational, artistic, and cultural events.



A VISIT FROM PROF. DR. EDMOND HAJRIZI, RECTOR OF KOSOVO UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY TO RECTOR PROF. DR. ERHAN TABAKOĞLU

Prof. Dr. Edmond Hajrizi and Dr. Cengiz Cesko, Rector of Kosovo University of Business and Technology (UBT), visited Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu in his office. Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Osman Nuri Hatipoğlu, Prof. Dr. Ünal Geçgel, and Prof. Dr. Hatice Palüzar were also present at the visit. During the visit, ideas were exchanged about the opening of Kosovo Technopark.

Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu stated "Trakya University Hospital is the largest hospital in the Balkans. In addition to more than 43 thousand students, Trakya University has 4765 international students from 80 different countries. Of the international students, 3 thousand are of Balkan origin. In other words, Trakya University is the university that hosts the most Balkan students." Referring to the relations of Trakya University with the Balkans, Tabakoğlu stated that they have organized many academic and scientific activities for the Balkans. Emphasizing the importance of the Balkan Universities Association, Tabakoğlu stated they are pleased to see the Kosovo University of Business and Technology (UBT) in BUA.

Giving information about the activities of Trakya Technopark, its current partners, and its functioning, Tabakoğlu said "There are 120 companies in Trakya University Technopark. The Chamber of Commerce and Organized Industry are among its partners. There are various opportunities in Technoparks such as low rent and tax reduction. Technoparks are very important for companies that carry out R&D studies." He underlined that the Technopark cooperation will be in a far stronger position by establishing contacts with Muhammet Bilal Macit, General Director of R&D Incentives of the Ministry of Industry and Technology. "With the inauguration of a Technopark in Kosovo, employment will be provided to students graduating from fields such as engineering, business administration, mechanical engineering, etc. In addition, the departments at the Kosovo University of Business and Technology (UBT) are also well suited for the Technopark."

UBT Rector Prof. Dr. Edmond Hajrizi stated that Trakya University Rector Erhan Tabakoğlu is followed as a

role model in the Balkans, the collaborations are taken as an example and BUA Rectors especially follow them. Stating that they would be happy to be involved in the Technopark project, Hajrizi expressed that such cooperation would provide mutual benefits and be a role model for other countries. Hajrizi further stated that a suitable area for the Technopark is available and pledged municipal support. He highlighted the potential for swift advancement of the project.

Following the meeting, Trakya University and Kosovo University of Business and Technology signed a bilateral cooperation agreement based on joint scientific studies and student/academician exchange. The agreement signed by Tabakoğlu and Hajrizi covers education, research, and other academic activities as well as cultural cooperation, including student and academic exchange programs, and internship opportunities in addition to educational, artistic, and cultural activities.

Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu expressed that they view Kosovo as a friendly and brotherly country, considering this agreement crucial for enhancing cooperation. He emphasized that the agreement would offer significant benefits for students, academics, and researchers.



1ST INTERNATIONAL BALKAN SYMPOSIUM ATTRACTS GREAT INTEREST

The opening of the "1st International Balkan Symposium" organized by the Governorship of Edirne, Trakya University, and the Edirne Platform for the Cooperation of Balkan Cities was held with intensive participation to carry the rich science, art, economy, and cultural heritage of the Balkan geography from past to present and today to tomorrow within the scope of permanent friendship and cooperation.

The opening ceremony was attended by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye Mehmet Kemal Bozay, Governor of Edirne Yunus Sezer, Minister of Regional Development of Kosovo Fikrim Damka, former President of Kosovo Fatmir Sejdiu, former Prime Minister of North Macedonia Vlado Buchkovski, MPs of Edirne Fatma Aksal, Ahmet Baran Yazgan, and Mehmet Akalın, Mayor Recep Gürkan, Chief Public Prosecutor Mustafa Çakmak, President of Administrative Court Selim Albayrak, President of Tax Court Yaşar Erdem, Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, Edirne Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs B.E. Murat Ahmet Yörük, President of the Bar Association Gökhan Karakoç, Vice-Rectors Prof. Dr. Osman Nuri Hatipoğlu and Prof. Ahmet Hamdi Zafer, Symposium Chair and Director of Edirne Vocational School of Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Mustafa Hatipler, deans, directors, and students.

After a moment of silence and the National Anthem, the symposium started with the concert titled "Breezes from the Balkans" by the Balkan Symphony Orchestra of the Trakya University State Conservatory, conducted by Vice-Rector and Director of the State Conservatory Prof. Ahmet Hamdi Zafer.

Symposium President and Director of Edirne Vocational School of Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Mustafa Hatipler started his speech by condemning the genocide committed by Israel in Gaza and expressed his gratitude for gathering the valuable painters, valuable academicians and administrators of the Balkan geography, the inexhaustible source of art and literature, under the roof of the 1st International Balkan Symposium in Edirne.

Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu began his speech by mentioning the historical and cultural significance of Edirne and emphasized that the city became the center of a great civilization as the capital during the Ottoman period. He noted that Edirne's educational institutions, especially Trakya University, were established as an extension of this legacy. He emphasized the university's mission towards the Balkans, the increase in international student enrollment, health services, and its active role in scientific meetings. He also stated that as the founder and permanent secretary general of the Balkan Universities Association, Trakya University has strengthened academic collaborations. He concluded his speech by thanking Edirne Governor Yunus Sezer and those who contributed to organizing the symposium.

Former Prime Minister of North Macedonia Prof. Dr. Vlado Buchkovski expressed his gratitude to be a guest of Trakya University and to participate in this symposium dedicated to the Balkans: "Today, the Republic of North Macedonia is developing the most friendly relations with the Republic of Türkiye. We respect our common history and want to build a common future for an integrated Europe. We Macedonians will never forget that Türkiye was the first country to recognize the independence of Macedonia in 1991.", and sincerely conveyed his wishes for a successful symposium.

Former President of the Republic of Kosovo, Prof. Dr. Fatmir Sejdiu, began his speech by emphasizing the importance of peace, stability, development, and soli-



darity. Stating that during the 1998-1999 war period, much of what had been built in Kosovo for centuries was destroyed, Sejdiu emphasized that the dangers of the war persist. Sejdiu drew attention to the global impact of Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza. He also referred to the negative impact of the emigration of qualified Kosovars on the country's development and demography. He added that Kosovo's accession to NATO, the European Union, and other international organizations would contribute to peace and stability in the Balkans. He emphasized the significance of the process supported by the European Union and the United States for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and concluded his speech by expressing his gratitude to the organizers of the symposium.

Fikrim Damka, Minister of Regional Development of the Republic of Kosovo, expressed his pleasure to be present at the symposium and stated that he was happy that Edirne was hosting thousands of young people in a manner befitting the Republic of Türkiye and its Ottoman heritage. He emphasized that Edirne, as the first city encountered upon entering Türkiye from the Balkans, has a special importance to them. Damka underlined that ensuring peace in the Balkans depends on the cooperation of politicians, but it is not yet enough, cultural and sportive activities would reinforce peace. He emphasized the importance of the role of the Republic of Türkiye in the Balkans and the importance of collaborations and stated that these collaborations should be enhanced.

Governor of Edirne Yunus Sezer stated that the Edirne Platform for Cooperation of Balkan Cities, which was established about 5 months ago and organized its first event, emerged from the need to establish closer relations between the cities. He emphasized that the platform aims to create cooperation and an ecosystem among Balkan cities in the fields of trade, culture, tourism, education, and sports. Sezer stated that Edirne has undertaken important missions throughout history and this platform will work per this mission. He also said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Higher Education Council, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs will support the platform. He concluded his speech by stating that

there is still a lot of ground to cover and that many doors will open with the gathering of hearts and expressed his gratitude to the participants.

Mehmet Kemal Bozay, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye emphasized the importance of the establishment of the Balkan Cities Cooperation Edirne Platform and stated that such platforms should be appreciated in the Turkish Century. Stating that food, energy, and agriculture have become national security issues with the Ukraine-Russia war, Bozay emphasized that climate change affects these areas globally. He stated that Thrace is a strategic region for Türkiye in agriculture and plays an important role in Türkiye's energy flow. Bozay said that the biggest project with the EU is the construction of the Çerkezköy-Kapıkule railway and this project is part of Türkiye's foreign policies for the future. He also highlighted that many projects on climate change adaptation and the environment are being carried out in Thrace.

After the opening speeches, Prof. Dr. İlber Ortaylı, who was an invited speaker at the symposium, gave a presentation on the Balkans. Throughout the day, 41 papers were presented by expert academicians in various sessions as part of the symposium.

Before the symposium, an exhibition titled "Edirne from the Brush of Balkan Painters" consisting of the artworks produced by Balkan painters during their workshops in Edirne was exhibited.



RECTOR PROF. DR. ERHAN TABAKOĞLU DELIVERED A PRESENTATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE&FOOD FAIR IN BULGARIA

Trakya University Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu attended the opening of the International Agriculture&Food Fair in Plovdiv, Bulgaria upon the invitation of Bulgarian Minister of Agriculture and Food Kiril Vatev.

The opening ceremony started with a traditional folk dance performance and was attended by Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, Consul General of the Republic of Türkiye in Plovdiv Korhan Küngerü, Advisor to the Rector Kamil Kolabaş, Director General of the National Meteorological Center Dr. Abdullah Al Mandus, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of the Republic of Kosovo Faton Peci, Regional Governor Ilia Zyumbyulev, Bulgarian MP Rosen Kosturkov, Rector of the University of Food Technologies Prof. Galin Ivanov, President of the Academy of Agriculture Prof. Violeta Bozhanova, Executive Director of IALV Krasimir Koev, academicians, farmers, and visitors.

Making a statement at the press conference held before the opening ceremony, Dr. Ivan Sokolov, General Director of the Fair, said there was a significant increase in the number of participants in the fair, which was held for the ninth time this year. Approximately 600 companies from 21 countries participated

in the fair, where the stand of Trakya University also took place. Rector Tabakoğlu presented a gift to Bulgarian Minister of Agriculture and Food Kiril Vatev who visited the stand of our university.

Rector Prof. Dr. Tabakoğlu and Prof. Dr. Yalçın Kaya, Head of the Department of Genetics and Bioengineering, made a presentation. In the presentation on "Turkey-Bulgaria Cooperation in Agriculture", Prof. Dr. Kaya emphasized the advantages of Trakya University, Technopark, the agricultural potential of the Balkans, and the advantages that the cooperation with Bulgaria will provide to the Balkans, while Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu invited the Ministers to Türkiye and expressed his gratitude for the great organization.



THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING OF THE BALKAN UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION WAS HOSTED BY TRAKYA UNIVERSITY

Trakya University hosted the Executive Board Meeting of the Balkan Universities Association (BUA), of which it is the Secretary-General and Permanent Board Member. With 92 members, the BUA's Executive Board Meeting, the largest Balkans higher education association, was held at the Trakya University Rectorate Building.

The meeting hosted by Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, Rector of Trakya University was attended by Prof. Dr. Artan Hoxha, Rector of Tirana University, President

of BUA 2024, Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigraphic, Rector of Tuzla University, former President of BUA, Prof. Dr. Osman Nuri Hatipoğlu, Vice-Rector for External Relations of Trakya University, and Assoc. Dr. Berdard Dosti, Vice-Rector of Tirana University, while Assoc. Dr. Sorin Costreie, Vice-Rector of the University of Bucharest, attended the meeting via online connection.

Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, Rector of Trakya University, expressed his gratitude for hosting the members

of the BUA Board of Directors at Trakya University and underlined the importance he attaches to face-to-face contact with University representatives from the Balkan geography. Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu thanked BUA 2024 President Prof. Dr. Artan Hoxha, Rector of the University of Tirana, Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigrabic, Rector of Tuzla University, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bernard Dosti, Vice-Rector of the University of Tirana and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sorin Costreie, Vice-Rector of the University of Bucharest for their participation and provided information about BUA. 2023 BUA President Rector Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigrabic conveyed her appreciation to Tabakoğlu for the successful VII BUA Meeting and emphasized that face-to-face contacts are important for BUA member universities to get to know each other and that these members, who share many aspects such as common culture, history, and geography, are not far away, but right next to us. Stating that the number of BUA members reached 92 after the BUA Tuzla Meeting in 2023, Rector Tabakoğlu stated they expect this number to exceed 100 after the BUA Tirana Meeting.

2024 BUA President Prof. Dr. Artan Hoxha, Rector of the University of Tirana, expressed his pleasure to be the President of BUA 2024 and said that they will do their best to move the association forward and that the experiences of previous BUA Meetings will be a guide in this regard.

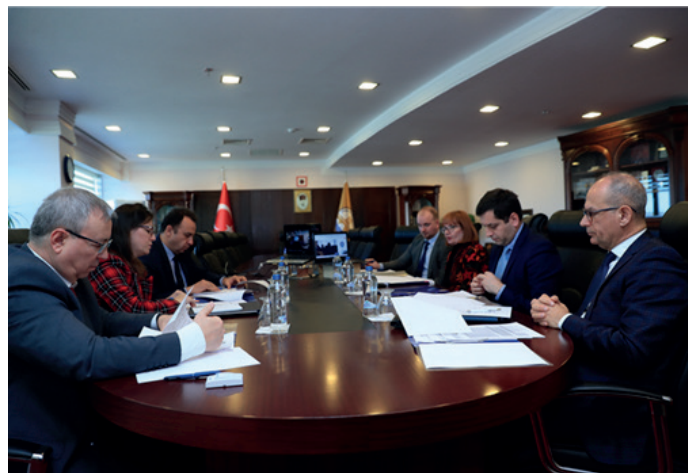
Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadzigrabi, Rector of Tuzla University, outlined the path and experiences of the BUA Meeting and highlighted Tuzla University's experience in recruiting new members and creating the meeting's agenda.

After the speeches, the agenda items were discussed and Rector Tabakoğlu emphasized the importance of bringing new universities to countries with fewer members to ensure balance among BUA member countries and stated that efforts should be made to add new members to the association from countries such as Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia. Tabakoğlu also underlined that 3 universities from Türkiye have already applied for BUA membership, and their membership status will be determined through a vote on new applications at the upcoming General Assembly in Tirana.

The primary focus of the meeting, which also included discussions on the appointment of the BUA President for 2025, was the agenda for the VIII BUA Meeting. The proposal by Prof. Dr. Artan Hoxha, Rector of the University of Tirana, to host the VIIIth BUA Meeting on June 3-4, 2024, at the University of Tirana, was approved by the BUA Board of Directors.

Rector Tabakoğlu extended his gratitude to all BUA Board Members for their participation, wished the University of Tirana success in the BUA 2024 Presidency, and emphasized that they will support the University in every step possible.

The meeting concluded with the presentation of gifts.



BALKAN MEDICAL JOURNAL MAINTAINS ITS SUCCESS

The Balkan Medical Journal, a rising star in scientific publishing under the Trakya University brand, continues to lead in its field. Renowned worldwide for its quality and impact factor, the journal has sustained its success this year. With its steadily increasing influence in the medical field, the journal maintains its strong performance according to the 2023 Journal Citation Reports.

The 2023 Journal Citation Reports (JCR), which displays the citation performance of journals indexed in SCIE and SSCI, has been published. Trakya University's Balkan Medical Journal maintained its success by ranking first among general medical journals in Türkiye with an impact factor of 3.0 in the report. Having topped the list in this category for three consecutive years, the Balkan Medical Journal is the only Turkish journal in the second quartile (Q2) of this category. It also ranked fifth among 257 indexed journals from Türkiye across all categories and 75th in the world in the general medical journals category.

Expressing great happiness over the success of the Balkan Medical Journal, Editor-in-Chief Prof. Dr. Servet Altay said, "This achievement is the result of our journal's commitment to high-quality research articles and rigorous publication standards. As the Balkan Medical Journal, we highly value the publication of scientific research, the promotion of knowledge sharing, and the advancement of health. This success confirms our journal's international recognition and ongoing impact. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our authors, editors, and publication team for their contributions. We are determined to maintain the journal's influence globally and strengthen our position as a leading scientific publication."

Rector Prof. Dr. Erhan Tabakoğlu, emphasizing that Trakya University has become a brand in academic publishing with its 19 journals and that the driving force behind this brand is the Balkan Medical Journal, stated, "We continue our efforts to increase Trakya University's impact in scientific publishing both nationally and internationally. Our achievements in line with these efforts motivate us and empower us to move confidently toward our goals. In this journey, where we aim for the top, the Balkan Medical Journal, with its experience and success, will also set a precedent for our other journals. I would like to thank the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Dr. Filiz Akata, the editor of our journal, Prof. Dr. Servet Altay, and their team for their contributions to enhancing our university's international recognition and visibility."



The Third International Congress at the Faculty of Medical Technical Sciences

The Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences at the University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani" successfully held the Third International Congress "Recent Trends in Biomedical Research, the Current State of Biomedical Research in the Adriatic Area". With wide participation from professors of partner universities in Bari, Aquila, and others, along with doctors, experts, professionals in the field, and students, this congress marked its undisputed success for the third consecutive year, becoming a platform for sharing ideas, experiences, and the latest discoveries. In his welcoming speech, the Rector of the University, Prof. Dr. Skender Topi, expressed his gratitude to all participants and organizers of this congress and acknowledged the achievements so far in the field of biomedicine and the quality of the work of young Ph.D. students. Ad-

ditionally, Prof. Topi introduced the First Journal of the Doctoral Cycle in Technical Medical Sciences, the first of its kind, whose works will serve not only science and biomedicine but also future generations.



International Scientific Conference 'EU Enlargement and the Challenges of Legislative Alignment in Albania'

At the University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani", the Department of Law, within the Faculty of Economics, successfully held the Scientific Conference "EU Enlargement and the Challenges of Legislative Alignment in Albania". This conference is organized as part of the Jean Monnet program, bringing together for three consecutive days experts, academics, and students interested in European integration. In his welcoming speech, the Rector of the University, Prof. Dr. Skender Topi, highlighted the conference's contribution within the framework of the Jean Monnet Program in aligning the University of Elbasan with European universities, as well as its role as a promoter in advancing the legislative mechanism that brings us closer to the European Union. The rector emphasized the importance of this Project for enriching the university curriculum by the Department of Law, offering modules and subjects aligned with European law.

