

# UNIVERSITIES, NETWORKS AND ACADEMIC COOPERATION (TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES)

**Prof. Dr. Rezan Tatlıdil**  
**Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences**  
**Ege University (Izmir, Turkey)**

**Prof. Dr. Maria Kaila**  
**University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece).**  
**Helena Theodoropoulou**

**University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece)**  
**Persa Fokiali**  
**University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The field of education, and especially that of higher education, is related directly to market needs as well as to social and political processes. In Europe, nowadays, this field is found itself in a period of transition with respect to both, its organizational structure and the establishment of its objectives. Such a transitional period is not independent of the multiform crisis of educational institutions that occurs in an environment of national diversities.*

*Under these circumstances there are two fundamental principles upon which a modern university is based. The first includes the formation of a more flexible framework that allows development according to international social and economic conditions and the continuously expanding globalization –the latter being a highly controversial concept that has been interpreted in various contradicting ways. The second, includes the perspective of establishing a common framework with the terms and conditions that influence formation and development of higher education as a whole. In other words a modern university takes two attributes into account: flexibility –which sounds a more or less straight forward concept; and cooperation in the sense analyzed below.*

## **INTRODUCTION: THE EVOLUTION OF NEW OBJECTIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

No-one doubts that there are some specific factors that make each educational system sound unique. These give to a university a valuable identity and create a comparative advantage that determines its attractiveness. Nevertheless apart from such unique attributes, it is assumed that there are also some basic factors met in every university. These, if planned within the context of a proper coordination and cooperation, they could create a common constitutional framework that has many positive impacts in the universities administration and operation. Such a common, cooperating framework is expected to lead to the formation of an educational environment which will be adequate to claim a fair proportion in the international sectoral competition. Moreover this environment has the power to face accurately and effectively most of the problems which “grosso modo” are common in all educational systems. Certainly, the whole attempt does not reject the view that the university should play an important and crucial role in a balanced development taking into account specificities, as these has been shaped in the process of history, and still keep attributing to the establishment of each university’s unique image.

## HISTORICAL APPROACH

It is worth examining the history behind these evolutions in the field of higher education. They had started by the time of the Magna Charta Universitatum of Bologna, signed over in 1088. However only after ten years, at the Declaration of Sorbonne, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May in 1288, it was claimed explicitly that the Universities accept to undertake the highly important and crucial responsibility of contributing to the formation of the so - called European Area of Higher Education, connecting development with culture and education. The Declaration has been signed over by the Directory of the four protector - countries, that is, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy. The reaction of the rest of the countries, led to the Declaration of Bologna in July 1288, which has been signed over by 29 countries and includes the principles embodied in the Declaration of Sorbonne.

The reference to a common area of education created reservations since it reminded acceptance of common strategies in the field of defense and reflected to some extent the surrender of free spirit in favor of a certain kind of unified thought imposed by globalization. Within this context, the last Declaration of Bologna clarifies that in fact there is an answer, or, better, an objection and a prediction against this reservation. More specifically the establishment of the common framework of European education promises to ensure respect different institutional frameworks, cultural identities, linguistic factors, educational systems as well as the Universities' autonomy.

According to the above, the basis for the expected policy of the European Universities Association was finally formulated to consist of the following:

- The Magna Charta Universitatum (1088), which supports the autonomy of the universities and ensures their ability to adapt to evolutionary changes.
- The Conference of the Ministers in the 800th anniversary of the foundation of Sorbonne, where emphasis has been given to the central role of higher education in the context of European development.
- The Declaration of Bologna (1288), signed over by 29 European countries, which introduces some specific procedures helping in the establishment of a European Area of Higher Education. With this declaration, higher education is set at the heart of the economic and cultural

competitiveness, since it gives to societies the chance to produce new, theoretical and applied knowledge, as well as to preserve, and disperse traditional knowledge.

- The Conference of Salamanca (1288) where the quality dimension has been declared as the basis of the development of the European Area of Higher Education and references have been made to the mobility, compatibility, attractiveness, as well as to the credit system and the degree equivalency.
- The Announcement of the Ministers of European Education (Prague, 1999), which persists in quality as the main criterion for ensuring the European universities' competitiveness. The term "convergence", which has been applied at the first meeting of Bologna so as to describe the need for common forms and guidelines for tackling educational matters is not used any more. The word "convergence" has been substituted by the terms "compatibility" and "comparability" which seem preferable since they are less strict and less binding.

The Declaration of Prague makes clear that the European countries have realized that higher education is expected to define its identity in a realistic and responsible way and to decide what actions should be undertaken within the context of current terms and needs. In addition, though, it has to defend and preserve its unique character formed within time. Moreover –where necessary- it should review this identity so as to fight successfully any new educational plans that reject or cannot embody the authentic philosophical principles in education<sup>1</sup>.

According to the above, the following picture has been almost completed: On the one hand, there is a bunch of problems that complicates matters and sets limits to the development of higher education. Against this issue, two points have to be taken into consideration. First, as expected, all international agreements emphasize, the need for the creation of a globally accepted understanding on subjects related to Universities, and emphasize the necessity of a consensus concerning their organization<sup>2</sup>. On

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<sup>1</sup> The term "authentic" is conceived here as the ability of higher education to include targets and restrictions absolutely relevant to the dynamic nature of its own object which can be analysed in such a way as to include knowledge/ science/ art, cognitive subjects, teaching, relationships between teachers and learners/ pedagogical principles, culture etc.

<sup>2</sup> Although it is emphasised that it is necessary to preserve the specificities that each educational system has on a national level. It is not, therefore, clear how and to what extent this universal approach can be essentially achieved

the other hand, the substantial differences that exist among educational systems make the institutions, and especially the Universities, re-examine their own values and practices, adapt to change, and redefine their objectives as well as the methods needed to attain their specific goals.

The whole attempt embodies at least two risks for the universities: On the one hand, in the name of the urgent need for reform<sup>3</sup>, there is the risk of an unfair abolition and a quick reconstruction of the existing issues and relations so that each university forms a separate system that does not converge anywhere. On the other hand, there is also the risk of imposing forced, compulsory procedures on the existing educational frameworks, which are not necessarily compatible with the existing systems and possibly are not going to be applied properly, neither provide long - term perspectives.

## PATHO-GENETIC FACTORS IN EDUCATION

At this point it is necessary to examine how far these controversial matters may influence educational practices. We bring as an example, the patho-genetic factors that cause the deficiencies of the Greek educational system:

- The new economic needs that predetermine the *defaulting character of educational research*.
- The free labor market orientation of that brings to universities students seeking for knowledge for one main reason, i.e that of satisfying the demand for a revenue –returning future career.
- The need to respond simultaneously to (a) the requirements for pure research created in the Research Centers that are developing fast nowadays (b) the employment requirements derived from the private sector and (c) the competition that the universities face from private education that often leads to strong reactions.
- The career- oriented goals of education and over-specialization of the objectives' which are considered as the necessary means for the interaction between Universities and society, ensuring an opening of Universities to the socio-economic reality.
- The on-going influence of economic factors on any branch of activity (thus also on educational activities). It is a recent phenomenon at an international level that even the decisions that are not related to economic sectors are determined on

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<sup>3</sup> The relevant deadline is the year 2010.

the basis of economic variables. As such they develop without any possibility of control within the accelerating, technologically-based environment of communication.

- The reproduction of non-educational issues such as bureaucracy and the enlargement of the administrative and financial sectors.
- The shrinkage of the status of teaching being the basic element of educational activities, and the changeable character of the teaching and learning methodologies of (MAYROGIORGOS, G., SIANOU E., Trends to the Formation of Curricula, in TSAMASFYROS, G., BASANDIS D. p 199).
- The prospect of European unification that alters the hierarchical priorities set in values, aims and means, focusing upon the need to achieve a general consent about European matters. It is not easy to interpret and implement this target, given the rigidity of the Greek educational structures to potential changes.
- The globalization of the educational procedures aiming in the acquisition of that type of knowledge that will help competition and usually a short term framework of principles and values.
- The transmission of products that have a rather symbolic character within the context of globalization. The University is one of the basic producers and users of such products, through primary and applied research. As such it is expected to form strategies and to develop mechanisms that are compatible with these functions.
- The shift in the demand for education (as far as career opportunities and social status are concerned) from the graduate to the post- graduate educational level.
- The strictly (over-) determined boundaries of educational policies together with political choices concerning education, which certainly are influenced by economic reasons and are the subsequence of other political and social agreements. These policies lead to new forms of activities in the field of higher education such as the mass university, the open university etc.
- Resulting from the above, problems related to the Universities autonomy and to the ways through which this autonomy is established.
- Problems related to the insufficient technological infrastructure.
- Lack of an integrated scientific approach, not only among different modules but also among different faculties and departments<sup>4</sup>.
- The perspective of life education as a new potential educational field, to which the Universities have a lot to contribute decisively. This

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<sup>4</sup> This perspective is a subject of a research project that is implemented experimentally at the University of the Aegean, through its network-type identity.

creates additional needs for new approaches to the production and the supply of knowledge.

Within such an environment, the University is expected today to play a twofold role in a society. It is an institution that cannot be considered as independent from production but at the same time it continues to represent a unit of culture and civilization. This double role on the basis of which idealistic principles of an abstractive character *should interact with reality, arouses problems and operational difficulties of both theoretical as well as practical nature.*

## **TOWARDS A COMMON FRAMEWORK: THE OUTCOMES OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

The outcomes of international conferences point out the educational targets that aim to the universities adaptation to reality, while taking into consideration the unique nature of the Universities. The most important outcomes are reported below.

The main directions that were reported in this conference are the following (European Universities Association (EUA) Dubrovnic, September 2001):

- Promotion of the development of an integrated system of European education and research through a systematic support of three items "teaching, learning and research" that should be directed so as to have a positive contribution to society. Creation of a European higher education that should be based on a unique research identity directed towards the common principles of institutional autonomy, education as a social product and research as the founding stone of learning.
- Establishment of grounds for a) confidence and cooperation between educational institutions and institutions of quality evaluation; b) coherence between missions and objectives of universities with those of curricula of studies c) respect of the balance between tradition and innovation, academic performance and socio- economic achievements, and development of the free will of students d) joint examination of teaching and research as well as of management and administration, e) response to the students' needs and to demand for other services apart from education.

- Coherence of research networks
- Investigation of the possibilities of creating links between the university and the community where it belongs geographically by establishing *economic, social and cultural criteria that will give emphasis to the social mission of education.*
- Acknowledgment of the wide role of the European Education as well as its responsibilities over society. Collaboration of the European Educational institutions with the European Commission, the European Parliament, national governments and research organizations. Support of networks between European institutions with institutions outside Europe (i.e to the South and Latin America, to Asia- Pacific- Middle East, to Africa, Africa, Mediterranean) and promotion of the attractiveness of European universities to these areas.
- Encouragement of the dialogue on key- issues such as the universal understanding of the legal impacts of the concept of University as a social and public good, or the vital importance of the relationship between production and dispersion of knowledge. It is within this context that the European Universities Association (EUA) will undertake actions with respect to the International Trade Organization, since it is well known, that the General Agreement to Trade Services (GATS) is a threat against the value of education as a social good. Within the framework of GATS negotiations the EUA should defend the special mission of higher education at the society' s service.
- The academic autonomy, the explicit institutional mission of the universities and the curricula of studies, the quality of these curricula *and of the academic staff, the continuous feedback through communication with university students, the flexibility of the organizational system that allows trans-scientific integration, the quality of infrastructure, the systematic use of human and capital resources, the international financing potentials, the effective use of human and material resources, the international scientific competitiveness, the contribution to the public dialogue about democratic values, the innovative potential in the fields of technology, science, culture, and art.*
- Maintenance of the institutional autonomy and diversity focusing on the elements of innovation. Communication with the public through systematic publication of findings, avoiding dependence on governmental and other interventions.
- SALAMANCA March 29 – 30, 2001, Synod of European Institutions of Higher Education
- The main conclusions were:
- Acknowledgment of the enormous contribution of higher education to the development of European society.
- Further investment in the operational activities of universities and other institutions of higher

education, aiming at the encouragement of the competitiveness in the educational area.

- Improvement of the conditions that will support the efforts of the universities to attain their goals
- The establishment of networks as the key to convergence. Establishment of a vast number of networks on the basis of different criteria.
- Promotion of the achievement of the required autonomy, that makes universities centers of free action and of responsible decision-making. This has two aims. The first is that universities are expected to undertake the responsibility of supporting their traditional fundamental values together while adapting to continuous progress. The second is the promotion of their ability to provide such learning *qualifications that help students to meet the labor market needs, promote mobility, increase public trust and acceptance, clarify fully their services and ensure quality of their activities.*

PRAGUE (Common Announcement of the Conference of the European Ministers of Education in Prague on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2001)

The major conclusions are:

- Re-confirmation of the common agreement aiming at the accomplishment of the European Area of Higher Education with a deadline at 2010.
- Acknowledgment of the necessity of cooperation among all countries to face challenges related to the “transnational education”.
- Consideration of higher education as a social good. Education has been always (and should continue to be) a public issue and responsibility as far as rules and basic principles are concerned. Students should be considered as full members of a learning community and not as “clients” or “consumers” of any marketable product of the institutions of higher education.
- Determination of the further joint procedures. Consideration of a common system for the equivalency of degrees, that is expected to make degrees and titles easily identified and compared. Adoption, also, of a system based on two main phases of studies, establishment of a common credit system, promotion of mobility and encouragement of the European collaboration in favor of quality.

Additional emphasis was given on:

- Life (or continuous) education as an essential element for the accomplishment of the European Area of Higher Education and as the key answer to the challenge of competitiveness and use of new technologies. Its goals would be the promotion of social cohesion, the strengthening of equal opportunities and the improvement of life conditions.
- The active involvement of the institutions of higher education and of their students in the

establishment of the European Area of Higher Education. It is clear that this area consists of institutions and programs of diverse nature, but in general it might be considered as an organization that gathers together quality specifications such as reliability, coherence, responsiveness, compatibility, and attractiveness.

It is quite obvious, first that the universal rationale asks from universities to shift their activities towards the production and reproduction of innovation. Universities should try to increase the proportion of their participation in the social environmental where they have the chance to work *and develop their teaching and research activities.* In such a way the establishment of new departments and new faculties seems to respond to current needs, either purely scientific, or realistically related to the complex potentials of the geographic and political environment in which they are to be embodied<sup>5</sup>. Emphasis should be given to the fact that the university is a cultural center within a certain district even within these districts where the development of tourism is the sole source of development. The cultural mission of the universities should be made clear through the learning procedures related to areas of knowledge that various schools and departments serve. Therefore, university programs should be developed as a part of the wider strategy of regional development and to function as fundamental levers that activate and restructures social life of the local communities.

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF THE AEGEAN: A CASE OF A UNIVERSITY NETWORK OPEN TO COOPERATION**

Incorporation and dispersion, two key words that seem incompatible among themselves, can find successful applications in the field of higher education working toward a bridging up of the different and conflicting objectives described in the relevant international rational. As an example, both of these two concepts are completely relevant in the

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<sup>5</sup> Unless the increase in the number of new departments and faculties represents a boom in the university- type employment requirements. The foundation of new schools and departments would therefore be in harmony with the market demands, provided that this is not a mere outcome of a so called “blow up” that might have occurred in the fields of sciences taught or of the trends to specialization ( an effect of such a procedure is the conception of economic transactions as academic activities).

case of the University of the Aegean which can be described as a university- network in itself. Each of them holds a part of the structural strategies and practices that are present in the procedures and activities of this university's departments. Moreover they are placed within the context of the "learning society", which seems to act as a leading issue in a country that focuses on development.

More specifically incorporation in the university of the Aegean is synonymous to the attraction and accumulation of people in a certain area due to the university's role as a center of multiple interests, or as cultural structure that proposes an integrated way of life. On the other hand dispersion is also a characteristic of the University of the Aegean since its incorporation does not mean centralization. Besides, dispersion is ensured by the regional character of the university and its presence in five islands, which are situated in the Aegean, far from the mainland. Such a location ensures the spreading of the university activities and the number of the activities that have been undertaken, its development and its results reflect the quality of the work done at the university, its effect on regional development, its contribution to cultural mobility and its involvement in innovation and creation.

The University of the Aegean is an experiment and a pilot case that has already defined its cultural identity and its role in the area. It is an institution that has its own, rather unique characteristics. It is adapted to the island-type regional societies that exist and develop far from the center, close to the country's (and the European Union's) frontiers; it acknowledges its geographical specificities. However this does not mean that it is a university that stays far from the events that affect higher education at an international level. The University seeks and undertakes a series of actions through which, it succeeds to be connected with the international educational processes. These actions, a great number of which are based on technological development, contain strong elements of innovation. In this sense the university's actions and procedures are in themselves experiments worth studying and subjects for research.

Apart from the "practical" / experimental part, this institution adopts a philosophy highly consistent to the modern international expectations about education. It adopts the general trends, according to which, any learning activity should be based on theory and experimental practice, on artistic expression and on non- conventional creativity, on the principles of sustainability as well as on socio-economic and environmental balances. Besides, any

new department in the institution helps the University to present, control, change or strengthen its image, and leads to a transformation and reconstruction of the shape of the already existing departments within the framework of some fundamental constitutional principles.

Development of the university of the Aegean could not be succeeded without the establishment and operation of networks. The scale economies that usually appear in a conventional university that operates in a campus give their place to the effectiveness of networks. These not only help in the coordination of the departments that are at a distance among themselves but also allows the university to be in touch with the rest of the academic world at a national and international level. In this way the university has the chance to cooperate and to adopt common policies with institutions that exist in other countries. Finally networks help the university to have a substantial contribution and to get involved not only in the educational- cultural sector but also in the socio-economic sector, and not only on a local level but also on a national and international level.

### **PROPOSITION: CONSTRUCTION OF UNIVERSITY NETWORKS: A KEY FOR CONVERGENCE OF NETWORKS OF DIFFERENT INTERESTS.**

The above analysis stresses the benefits for a network of universities based on cooperation. An example of such a model pilot case is the union of the Black Sea's universities. This is analyzed below.

The Black Sea area is characterized by tragic historic events of high tension and international importance. In this region, a long series of parameters, among which its geo- strategic location, vastness, critical population density, human capital's productivity, and wealth of natural sources create a strong background of high development potentials. However a desired level of social and economic growth can be reached only under the condition that multiple cooperation is developed among the area's nations leading to common plans and actions in the region.

The adoption of such an attitude has been the basis for establishing a network among universities

known as the "Black Sea Universities Network" (BSUN), aiming to promote cooperation for sustainable development in the region of the Black Sea and to help in transforming this part of the world into an area of peace, freedom, stability and welfare. This institution leans on the following fundamental assumptions:

1) Cooperation among neighboring nations in certain key- sectors in which the nations have common comparative advantages can be highly beneficial for the area as a whole but also for each nation separately.

2) Universities can play a dominant role in economic and cultural development.

An interesting application of such a cooperation on a lateral level is found in the case of Greek and Turkish universities. This cooperation proves to be fruitful and its results are already apparent, forming a case that can be used as a pilot for similar applications. Thus, as a part of the activities of two universities located in areas of the Aegean Archipelago (specifically in Rhodes and Izmir) one can find summer courses covering subjects such as Languages and Culture that operate on both, Greek and Turkish level (similar summer courses operate also at the University of Middle East in Ankara). In parallel, cooperation among students of these two universities is already a fact concerning cultural interchanges and lectures on various subjects of common interest. No doubt, such actions help in getting students to know each other and in establishing a dynamic framework of common understanding. Within the same context common research projects are undertaken at an undergraduate level covering subjects on key-fields, such as Modern Technologies and Archaeology, while it is under way a postgraduate course on Environmental Education organized by the University of the Aegean, Middle East University of Ankara and the Universities of the Black Sea.

These movements bring adequate evidence that, in areas of old conflicts and differences, the universities have the willingness and also possess the appropriate methods and know- how so as to become focal points of civilization, working towards relaxation of tensions. This means of course that universities are something more than educational institutions. They act as representatives of their nations, operating as each nation's image and mind; they support innovative approaches and invent solutions about development; they are aware about the need to open channels of communication, information and culture within the basic

international framework created by social and economic globalization.

According to the above, the targets of the above mentioned universities' Network refer to the following needs:

- Definition and promotion of the area's unique identity in an environment in which European integrity and globalization play a vital role;
- Support of stability in the Balkans
- Promotion of common research and development projects on key- subjects

A list of more specific aims is as follows:

- Development of distance education
- Evaluation and assessment of the area's natural and human resources
- Upgrading of local societies' functioning
- Scientific, economic, cultural interchanges.
- These targets are further specified to include:
  - Promotion of experiences, information and know- how between universities
  - Encouragement of plans of common interests
  - Promotion of compatibility and harmonization of the universities' administrative structure.
  - Support of scientific and educational cooperation among universities as well as between universities and other economic and research institutions
  - Development of contacts between human beings, promotion of cultural cooperation, encouragement of projects of protecting natural environment, the historical and cultural inheritance.
  - Some institutions with which the Network cooperates are the Black sea Economic cooperation (BSEC), the Parliament of Black Seas countries (PASBEC), the Working Committee, the Black Sea Bank of Commerce and Development, the Black Sea World Bank).

Under such circumstances there are three parameters that may be considered as critical in any discussion of the targets of this experiment:

- Sustainable regional development in the long run as an approach in solving urgent and common problems)
- Compatibility and improvement in the means of cooperation within the framework of the Network
- Academic cooperation

Through coordinated actions, these universities are expected to act as levers for stability, cultural protection and scientific and economic interchanges, thus helping in the dispersion of the benefits produced by scientific and technological research all over the area under consideration. Moreover it is expected that the Network will work towards protecting freedom, democratic ideas, human rights and respect –i.e. in favor of ideals and principles that are of specific importance in an area of vulnerable balances. Viewed from such a humanitarian and cultural aspect, the Network contributes substantially to the development of the fundamental European principles. Furthermore to the extent that the Network will include targets such as the development of tourism, entrepreneurial cooperation, planning against terrorism, illegal transfer of guns and drugs and crime it is understood that it is necessary that its members trust each other. This is why it is considered as specifically important the support declared by the Turkish President Demirel, The President of Romania Iliescu and the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The BSUN operates as a section of the European Academic Society; hence it has a constant cooperation with the European and international academic unions. The main bodies of the Network are the General Assembly, the Executive Office, the Permanent International Secretariat (situated in Konstanza, Romania), and five centers:

- Center for quality ascertainment, certification of units, evaluation and recognition of degrees (Ankara, Turkey)
- Center for the organization of Summer courses and short study courses (Ucrania)
- Center for Common research programs (Azerbaijan)
- Center for publications (Barna, Bulgaria)
- Center for postgraduate studies (University of the Aegean, Greece).

The entire structure shows the dynamism and the dispersion that this Network promises, while its economic unit, the “Black Sea Economic Cooperation” (BSEC), experiences a worldwide recognition, with important inter governmental and inter parliamentary connections in the field of employment and banking. It is noticeable that BSEC has been already recognized from the parliaments of eleven European member states. In this sense it represents the image of an enlarged Europe since the universities of many of the states that belong to the Network are among those that have signed the Bologna Convention.

Such a Network represents the role that the universities are expected to play bending upon the specificities of their areas and working connecting these with the international problems and conventions. To the extent that the universities have up to a certain

degree common scientific and academic problems, this Network works towards common solutions. Thus in the field of quality of studies, the Network offers opportunities for the organization of new programs with the aim to upgrade its scientists and specialists. Among other things this is succeeded through the establishment of high quality equivalent educational conditions and compatibility among the universities’ administration systems. The exchange of information, experiences and views as well as the provision of the appropriate conditions for the implementation of such courses create an appropriate background for:

- a common educational planning aiming to a better quality in education.
- an internalization of the concept of networking based on the dynamics that the comparative advantages of each area form. In this way, the scientific and cultural wealth of the area is promoted in a world that becomes more and more competitive in any field and also in the field of knowledge. ....

We refer to a place located on the crossroad of civilizations, historically and politically sensitive, that struggles to preserve its specificities and uniqueness while affected by the Eastern and Western influences.

Within the context of such thoughts, the integrating scientific cooperation can be achieved through the establishment of networks and common programs, which will definitely support the efforts of the Universities and the communities in which they operate, to attain their developmental goals.



In a broader level these tools can also contribute to the creation of areas where common political strategies among different countries is possible to be decided, which would affect not only the educational and cultural activities, but also the wider economic and social sectors of society.

## CONCLUSIONS

We are in an area situated on the crossroads of civilizations; it is a historically sensitive area that makes an effort to preserve its identity struggling between East and West. The future is more promising out of networks of cooperation that give the ideal answer to the non diversified concept of globalization.

The field of universities is an authentic area where concepts, approaches, plans and programs are processed. It is a field of democratic values, of movement of ideas, of a free access to knowledge and of an evaluation of the quality of knowledge. In other words it is an area of high principles.

The new interaction between university matters and economic trends expresses the need of universities to make an opening to the social field, not necessarily by accepting the prospect of transformation into a centers of entrepreneurial and commercialized activities. This opening does not mean absorbance; it means networking and this is a big challenge to all.

Networks and cooperation mean that a great many things should be done not only for the development of education but also for the benefit of national needs and international targets.

The BSUN proves to be a wonderful chance so as to implement a multi-sectoral pilot development plan for all the involved countries. This is expected to prove the strategic role of education and to form the belief about a global decentralized and sustainable development for the societies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that will protect and strengthen the human being, which is the unit that needs but also produces welfare.

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