



ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF  
THESSALONIKI

Concept Note

## Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea

Establishing a SDSN chapter for the countries of the Black Sea Region

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### SDSN: A global initiative

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) has been operating since 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. SDSN mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement.

The aim of the network is to accelerate joint learning and promote integrated approaches that address the interconnected economic, social, and environmental challenges confronting the world. SDSN works closely with United Nations agencies, multilateral financing institutions, the private sector, and civil society.

The organization and governance of SDSN aims to enable a large number of leaders from all regions and diverse backgrounds to participate in the development of the network. The SDSN Leadership Council brings together global sustainable development leaders from all regions drawn from civil society, public, and private sectors. It acts as the board of SDSN. Much of SDSN's work is led by National or Regional SDSNs, which mobilize knowledge institutions around the SDGs. Several Thematic Networks mobilize experts from around the world on the technical challenges of implementing the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement. (<http://unsdsn.org>)

## Existing Networks

In the wider area of the Black Sea, three national and one regional SDS networks are already installed. These are SDSN Russia, Greece and Turkey, as well as the SDSN Mediterranean.

More information about these networks:

SDSN Russia: Specializes in research projects relating to alternative and sustainable energy models, climate change issues, decarbonization and entrepreneurship. The network is seeking to transform first-class scientific research into concrete policy action.

Location: Moscow, Russian Federation

Hosted by: Russian the Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)

Website: <http://www.ranepa.ru/eng/sdsn/sdsn-russia>

SDSN Greece: SDSN's 22nd network, is another valuable national network in the Mediterranean region along SDSN Italy, Spain, and Turkey. The network convenes Greek stakeholders on the local priorities of this biodiversity hotspot, while focusing on topics like natural capital and climate change. SDSN Greece also explores the domain of sustainable development in times of crisis.

Location: Athens, Greece

Hosted by: ICRE8: International Center for Research on the Environment and the Economy and the Political Economy of Sustainable Development Lab

Website: <http://unsdsn.gr>

SDSN Turkey: The Turkish Sustainable Development Solutions Network was launched on June 27-28, 2014, in Istanbul, Turkey. Bogaziçi University will coordinate the activities of this new SDSN network of universities, NGOs and businesses interested in identifying and implementing solutions initiatives addressing Turkey's sustainability challenges, including sustainable cities, sustainable agriculture, deep decarbonization, sustainable tourism, and green campuses.

Location: Istanbul, Turkey

Hosted by: Boğaziçi University

Website: <http://unsdsn.boun.edu.tr>

SDSN Mediterranean: Is a regional initiative that aims to enhance the sustainable use and development of the Mediterranean region engaging in a wide array of projects and partnerships. Countries and territories included in the regional network: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Gibraltar, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey.

Location: Siena, Italy

Hosted by: University of Siena

Website: <http://www.sdsn-mediterranean.unisi.it>

In the wider Black Sea region, there is also another network that will serve as the foundation of the new regional SDSN chapter. It's the Black Sea Universities Network – BSUN. The BSUN represents the cooperation framework for Academic Institutions from the Black Sea Region. The BSUN intends to

facilitate the inter-university cooperation and the generation of synergies among education, scientific research, innovation and cultural cooperation.

At present, the Network includes 110 universities from the 12 member countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.

BSUN cooperation topics for scientific research:

- Sustainable Development
- Networking on Innovation and Knowledge Transfer
- Energy Security & Renewable Energy Sources
- Advanced & Multifunctional Materials
- IT&C - Networking & High-Performance Computing
- E-health & Telemedicine
- Social & Cultural Cohesion in the BSR

The BSUN was founded in June 1998, when the rectors and representatives of more than 60 universities met in Constanta and agreed on the principles that have to govern a cooperation platform of flexible structure, without additional bureaucracy. At the level of the BSUN as an organization, it is the role of the General Assembly / Conference of Rectors from the Black Sea Region to evaluate strategic objectives and to define a framework program. Based on this program, the Executive Board and the Presidential Troika is identifying priority projects and activities.

BSUN priorities:

- Supporting the efforts of BSUN member universities in the process of reform of Higher Education and integration in the European Higher Education Area;
- Strengthening the university autonomy;
- Improvement of quality of education and quality culture within Member University;
- Supporting the focusing of education processes on students;
- Exchange of best practices in the field of qualifications' framework.

The President in Office for the period 2018-2020 is the Rector of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, prof. Pericles Mitkas.

<http://www.bsun.org>

## **Our vision**

The vision of SDSN Black Sea is to unite the people of the wider area under one goal, that of sustainable development. People coming from different countries, using different languages, with different background, different social, cultural and historical status, different traditions and habits, different religion, even people coming from countries that are in direct or indirect confrontation, to join their forces and work together for the improvement of their lives and for ensuring a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future.

To achieve this goal people, governments, businesses and entrepreneurs will have to find common ground for collaboration, participation and implementation of the sustainable development goals.

The main task of the SDSN Black Sea will be to bring together all those involved and to coordinate their actions, thus facilitating the achievement of the SDGs.

## Members and Partners

SDSN Black Sea will base its foundations on the existing SDS networks and the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN). All three national SDSN (Russia, Greece and Turkey) and the regional one (SDSN Mediterranean) will be contacted and asked to participate in the new regional chapter.

During the last Conference of the Rectors of the BSUN held in Thessaloniki on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, it was decided to pursue the development of a regional SDSN for the area of the Black Sea. All the universities who were represented at the Conference of the Rectors along with the other universities of the BSUN who were not present at this conference will be asked to participate and will form the original structure of the new regional chapter.

Other universities and stakeholders either from the BSUN countries or even countries of the wider Black Sea region not yet represented in the BSUN will also be asked to participate in the SDSN Black Sea establishing in this way a solid and as wide as possible network.

## Governance

The governance model for SDSN Black Sea will be flexible yet productive and effective, in order to face the challenges of the new network.

- Leadership Council:

The provisional Leadership Council will include one representative from each one of the countries participating in BSUN. Currently there are 12 countries participating in the network. It will also include one representative from each one of the three national SDSNs currently active in the area (SDSN Russia, Greece and Turkey).

The Leadership Council will also include three members of the Host Council, the president and the Secretary General of BSUN and of course the Chair of SDSN Black Sea.

They will meet two or three times a year, either in person or through teleconference, and their responsibility will be to organize and coordinate the tasks undertaken by the network

- Chair of the Leadership council:

The Leadership Council will be provisionally chaired by Nicolaos THEODOSSIOU, professor of Water Resources Management at the Department of Civil Engineering of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

- Host Council:

The host council will be installed at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece and will serve as the node of communication and contact between the members of the regional chapter, the Leadership Council and SDSN global. It will also coordinate with the Secretariat, all operational issues of the network.

The Host Council will comprise at least four professors from AUTH specialized in the SDGs and one representative of the Rectorate Authorities of the University.

- Secretariat:

Its task is to coordinate day-by-day business of SDSN Black Sea. It facilitates initiatives and mobilizes resources. It is managed by a Managing Director and is appropriately staffed for providing sufficient support. The main secretariat will be placed at the hosting institution but there will be branches in most of the participating members as well.

## **Hosting institution**

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), founded in 1925, draws its inspiration from the ideas of Greek scientist and philosopher Aristotle, who established the concepts of nature, learning, and practice, as the fundamentals of education. Upon entering the campus, the visitor is greeted by the statue of Aristotle, a constant reminder of his philosophical beliefs, underlining that our future intimately depends on the goals we set.

The goals of academic freedom, service to community, and, above all, the relentless pursuit of knowledge motivated the foundation of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and, since then, excellence in scientific research has guided the University's mission over almost a century.

Currently, a number of domestic initiatives support scientific and technological innovation and a significant number of cross-national synergies emphasize on academic collaboration, along with sustainable and inclusive growth.

AUTH is the largest public University in Greece and one of the largest in South Eastern Europe, with around 83.000 students and more than 2.000 academic staff. It comprises 42 schools covering all scientific fields. According to International University Rankings (QS, Times, ARWU), AUTH steadily reserves one of the two top places among Universities in Greece depending on the scientific field. It is also ranked exceptionally high on a worldwide scale as it occupies the 16<sup>th</sup> place in the Classics & Ancient History field (QS-2018), and it is included among the top 1,3% of the Universities (compared to 20.000 universities, Times-2018).

Concerning international relations and European educational programs, AUTH is a member of different networks. It has currently signed 172 active Inter-University agreements with Universities all over Europe, USA, Canada and Asia. Bilateral agreements with more than 600 European Universities reinforce the international perspective and position of the University. In the University there are also 2 active UNESCO Chairs.

Moreover, AUTH participates as member in 65 international educational organizations, Associations and University Networks and in 16 student organizations, aimed at international cooperation of the academic community to promote and develop academic and research activity.

The general Research Performance in AUTH reveal the active participation in 48 Research Networks, implements more than 1.400 national, European and international research projects per year and cooperates closely with many universities, research institutions and enterprises in Greece and abroad. Over 1.000 teaching and research staff members are active, working all over Europe.

The current active participation of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki to the Sustainable Development Solutions Network will serve as a guide for a successful management of the new regional chapter for the Black Sea region.

[www.auth.gr](http://www.auth.gr)