

1ST EDITION

OCTOBER 2024

NEWSLETTER



BOKU
UNIVERSITY

AUT-BOKU 2030
STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

The Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT) has 6.000 students, employs 350 Professors and Lecturers, and is the only Life Science University in Albania. AUT is the center of research and academic education in Agriculture, Forestry, Wood Science, Food Science, Biotechnology, Agribusiness Rural Development policies, as well as Veterinary Medicine. The University has an excellent infrastructure including a large research farm. During the last 30 years, Albania and with this the agricultural sector has faced a severe economic transformation. Currently 21 % of Albania's GDP comes from agriculture and AUT, as the leading academic Life Science University in Albania, plays a key role in the preparation of specialists and in providing the know how for this sector. Since Albania aims for full EU membership, an additional adaptation of the Agricultural sector is expected and the role of high-quality research & education is of increasing importance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE AUT STRATEGY 2030

In meeting these challenges the rectorate of AUT and BOKU University have initiated the reform project "AUT strategy 2030" financed by the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Austria to cover 4 major objectives:

- **Scientific research:** AUT provides high quality research, comparable to similar Life Science Universities within the EU: ***Competitive research programs (EU-wide)***
- **Teaching:** AUT offers high quality study programs to be an attractive university for students from Albania and the neighboring countries: ***Competitive study programs (EU-wide)***
- **Knowledge transfer:** AUT is a key player in knowledge transfer, new businesses, advices politicians and plays an important role for the society: ***Knowledge transfer and new businesses***
- **Excellence:** AUT with its research, teaching, and third mission is a Regional Centre of Excellence, in the Balkan area: ***Regional Centre of Excellence***

PROJECT HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION?

On April 15, 2024, with the signatures of two ministers from the Republic of Albania and Austria, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed, securing the budget for the next four years to implement the AUT 2030 strategy.



Figure 1

Signature ceremony on April 15, 2024, in Vienna, Austria. From left to right in the photo: Anila Denaj, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania; Ogerta Manastirliu, Minister of Education and Sports of Albania; Martin Polaschek, Minister for Science and Education of Austria; and Norbert Totschnig, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, and Water of Austria.

The official kick-off meeting on May 25, 2024, with the signing ceremony between the Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT) and BOKU University, under the auspices of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, Edi Rama, marked the official start of the project.



Figure 2

Front row: BOKU Rector Eva Schulev-Steindl and AUT Rector Fatbardh Sallaku. Second row: Former BOKU Rector and Project Coordinator Hubert Hasenauer, and Prime Minister Edi Rama.

The Project Management Committee meeting (see photo of the first meeting), consisting of the AUT Rectorate and BOKU advisors, took place. Two project managers were hired to ensure smooth coordination of the project: Dipl.-Ing. Mark Rupa, MSc, a former CNVP employee fluent in German, English, and of course Albanian, and Dr. Thomas Koller, a former lawyer. Mark Rupa is stationed at the university in Tirana, while Thomas Koller works at BOKU as well as in Tirana. Additional support comes from Mag. Anika Stork, a consultant who assists with the planned workshops and focus groups.



Figure 3

First Management Committee meeting in Tirana as part of the kick-off meeting at the end of May 2024

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR?

A joint teaching committee between AUT and BOKU was established, and the teaching and research situation was assessed during two meetings in June and September 2024. As a first result, we observed that the teaching load for the faculty is high, confirming that AUT is attractive to students interested in agriculture, business development, forestry, and the environment. AUT is composed of five faculties, each with different needs and ideas. Notably, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine differs from the other four faculties as it offers only one program and is working towards official accreditation of its research and teaching by the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE). This accreditation requires meeting certain quality standards, including a standardized European educational program. The process is strongly supported by Petra Winter, President of the EAEVE and current Rector of the Veterinary University in Vienna, Austria, who joined the BOKU team for our last meeting in September 2024 in Tirana (see photo).



Figure 4

The President of the EAEVE (European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education), Rector Petra Winter from the Veterinary University in Vienna, Austria; the Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Prof. Dr. Rezart Postoli.

NEXT STEPS - AUT WORKSHOP FROM OCTOBER 27 TO 30, 2024

With the kick-off meeting completed, the organization established, and the assessment of teaching and research performance conducted, our next step is to conduct a survey among faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The goal is to initiate a joint process to define the major topics that the Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT) should focus on. In the coming days, you will receive an email in which we kindly ask you to share your thoughts on how you envision the future of your university. Additionally, discussions with "Focus Groups" are planned for our next meeting from October 27 to 30, 2024.

As a result of these activities, we expect to identify the key topics that AUT should prioritize, enabling us to discuss the first steps in implementing the AUT 2030 strategy for teaching and research.

Although the "AUT 2030 Implementation Efforts" began only four months ago, a significant amount of information has already been gathered, and many ideas have been discussed. We would like to extend our gratitude to the deans, department heads, and everyone involved so far for their great support and dedication in helping make AUT the leading life sciences university in the Balkan region.

**Rectorate of AUT
BOKU Advisor Team**

1ST EDITION

NEWSLETTER



BOKU
UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER

2024