



# ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

## Permanent International Secretariat

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BS/WG/ED/R(2021)1

### REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION

Videoconference, 14 April 2021

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Education was held online on 14 April 2021.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Panagiotis PASSAS, Director-General for International and European Affairs, Education for Hellenic Diaspora and Intercultural Education, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.
3. Opening remarks were made by the BSEC PERMIS Secretary-General, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES.
4. The meeting was attended by representatives from the following BSEC Member States:  
  
Republic of Albania  
Republic of Armenia  
Republic of Azerbaijan  
Republic of Bulgaria  
Hellenic Republic  
Romania  
Russian Federation  
Republic of Turkey  
Ukraine
5. The representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC attended the meeting as the BSEC Related Body.
6. The following BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partners attended the Meeting:  
Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN)  
Republic of Slovenia
7. The List of Participants of the Meeting is attached as **Annex I**.

## **AGENDA ITEM 1: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

8. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as **Annex II**.

## **AGENDA ITEM 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BSEC COUNCIL AND THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATIONS AND JOINT STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF EDUCATION**

9. The participants took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on the ways and dynamics of the implementation of the Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the BSEC Council and the follow-up of Declarations and Statements adopted by the Ministers in charge of Education, since the last Meeting of the Working Group (BSEC Headquarters, 14 November 2019).

10. The Member States were requested to update the list containing the coordinates of their respective focal points in charge of Education (attached as **Annex III**) in order to facilitate a direct communication between the BSEC PERMIS and the relevant Ministries.

## **AGENDA ITEM 3: PRESENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE PERIOD OF 1 JANUARY 2020 – 31 DECEMBER 2021 BY THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC, THE CURRENT COUNTRY-COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION**

11. The delegation of the Hellenic Republic, the current Country-Coordinator, briefly presented the draft Plan of Action of the Working Group on Education covering the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021 (**attached as Annex IV**), including the general objectives and key priorities of the Working Group, as well as the challenges and opportunities for further development of projects and initiatives within the Working Group.

12. The Working Group considered and adopted the presented Plan of Action for its submission to the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and expressed its appreciation for the work of the delegation of the Hellenic Republic in the preparation of the above-mentioned document.

## **AGENDA ITEM 4: SHARING EXPERIENCES AND EXCHANGING VIEWS ON THE SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

13. The participants discussed the challenges facing the Education sector due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and shared good practices in the field. The Working Group expressed its interest to learn how different countries have resolved the problem of online learning and building public trust on their work.

14. Moreover, participants presented ways and means for adapting the education systems, the teachers and students of the BSEC countries to the digital era, in order to better respond to the current global needs and eventual future challenges, laying a special focus on strengthening and exchanging good practices on digital skills at all levels of education.

15. In this regard, the representatives of the Country-Coordinator, with the assistance of the BSEC PERMIS, will prepare a list of common denominators on the experiences gained and on the best practices implemented by Member States, in order to promote possible

measures and mechanisms with a wider, regional effect for mitigating the negative consequences of the pandemic.

16. The delegation of the Russian Federation shared information about the Workshop (roundtable) on the ecological education in the BSEC Member States that will be held in the upcoming months and invited all interested parties to take part in the first World Congress of School Teachers of History that will be held in Moscow in October 2021.

17. All the presentations and national inputs provided by the Member States under this Agenda item are attached to the Report as **Annex V**.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: CONSIDERATION OF CONCRETE PROPOSALS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT PROGRAMMES**

18. Within this Agenda Item, the following sub-items were considered:

##### **a) Creation of a Leaflet/Brochure on Higher Education in Black Sea Region;**

19. The participants took note of the information provided by the Hellenic Republic on the state of affairs regarding the progress of finalizing the leaflet/brochure on Higher Education in the Black Sea Region, underlining that although the proposal was introduced to the Working Group in 2018, not all Member States provided necessary information on the matter.

20. The Working Group supported the further development of the brochure on Higher Education in the Black Sea Region and, in this regard, agreed to continue with the realization of the above initiative with the contributions of the interested Member States.

21. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic will prepare a brochure based on the collected data from the Member States in cooperation with the BSEC PERMIS, in digital format, which will be sent to the Member States for final approval. In addition, the importance of utilizing digital technologies for more efficient presentation of the brochure to the target audience was discussed. In this respect, BSEC PERMIS expressed its readiness to upload the above digital brochure on its website.

##### **b) Information Network in Recognition and Equivalency of Qualification in Higher Education among BSEC Member States;**

22. The delegation of the Republic of Turkey updated on the possible development of an Information Network in Recognition and Equivalency of Qualification in Higher Education among BSEC Member States.

23. In this context, a comprehensive exchange of views was held among the participants and, given the complexity of the issue, it was agreed to establish a network of contacts among the interested Member States, in order to further discuss the ways of possible cooperation. Accordingly, interested Member States will inform the Secretariat of the names of their responsible representatives and authorities, in order to organize a first online working-meeting for delineating the field of their potential cooperation; representatives of the BSUN will also be invited to this online event so as to contribute with their accumulated expertise.

**c) Black Sea Academic and Research Cooperation Facilitation Association;**

24. The Working Group took note of the presentation of the Russian Federation on the updates about the BSAARC Initiative, in particular, its transformation into a non-profit organization – the Black Sea Academic and Research Cooperation Facilitation Association (BSAARC FA), aimed at the promotion of international multilateral cooperation in the field of science, innovation and education in the Black Sea Region. Ways of cooperation of the BSAARC Association with the BSEC Working Group on Education were further proposed by the delegation of the Russian Federation. The relevant presentation is attached as **Annex VI**.

25. The BSEC PERMIS highlighted the importance of synergies between academia, science and business and proposed that the BSAARC Association considers the possibility of establishing contact with the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN), in order to benefit from the latter's accumulated experience and its ability to reach the 120 Higher Education Institutions which participate in BSUN.

26. Following the deliberations on the issue, the Working Group decided to continue the consideration of this item at its next meeting.

**e) Other project proposals**

27. No discussion was held under this agenda item.

**AGENDA ITEM 6: YOUTH AND SPORTS ISSUES AND EDUCATION**

28. The BSEC PERMIS informed on the third Workshop for Young Diplomats from the BSEC Member States on the "Sustainable Development in the Black Sea Region", jointly organized by the BSEC PERMIS and the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, Turkey (KAS), which was held online on 12 October 2020.

29. The Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Turkey gave a brief information concerning the activities carried out by the Ministry in the field of youth and sports including training programs and workshops to support young people during the pandemic period, as well as Ministry's digital sports platform (SPORT IN TURKEY), and volunteering activities. In addition, it was proposed that the establishment of a Working Group in the field of Youth and Sports within the scope of the BSEC might contribute to the International Cooperation between the BSEC Member States and allow to organise international camps and international youth and sport activities. The presentation is attached as **Annex VII**.

30. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the Working Group on the adjustment of the youth policy in the Russian Federation in 2020, in particular, adoption of the Federal Law "On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation" that determines the goals, principles and forms of the implementation of youth policy in the Russian Federation, and presented information on the project the All-Russian action of mutual assistance "We are together", as well as methodological recommendations on the activities of regional volunteer headquarters to help people in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

31. Following the conclusions of the last Meeting of the Working Group, the delegation of the Russian Federation reiterated the importance to organize a Workshop for talented young teachers / educators who involved in the field of higher education from the BSEC Member States. The Russian delegation expressed its readiness to prepare a relevant concept note, which will be sent to the members of the Working Group in a timely manner.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7: EXCHANGING VIEWS ON POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND PROJECTS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION**

32. BSUN Secretary General Prof. Eden MAMUT briefed the participants on the signing of a *General Framework Agreement on Cooperation* between the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) and the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR), concluded in mid-2020; the working-relations between the above Institutions were established upon the BSEC PERMIS initiative. Consequently, BSUN became part of the network of universities that are developing studies in the field of Cultural Routes, consisting of theoretical studies and interdisciplinary experimental activities to support cultural routes and in particular, the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

33. In this context, BSUN will promote the Black Sea Region within the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe framework, by co-organizing an International Conference in December 2021 in Turkey. The above prestigious event will be organized by the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR), the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (EPA), the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey and BSUN, with the active contribution of BSEC PERMIS.

34. The BSUN representative also informed about the ongoing events (webinars and workshops) aimed at addressing the current challenges and better supporting sustainable socioeconomic recovery in the post-pandemic era.

35. The representative of PABSEC provided the information on its current and forthcoming activities.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8: EXAMINING THE POSSIBILITY OF INSTITUTIONALIZING INITIATIVES AIMED AT BRINGING YOUNGER GENERATION IN THE BLACK SEA REGION CLOSER AND RAISING AWARENESS AMONG THEM ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE BSEC ORGANIZATION**

36. At the last Meeting of the Working Group, the participants underlined the importance of bringing Youth and younger generations in the Black Sea region closer and raising awareness among them about the significance of promoting and enhancing regional cooperation and, in this regard, suggested exploring the possibility of institutionalizing various initiatives /events and replicating them on annual /biennial basis.

37. As a follow up, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic proposed to the Working Group to consider the organization of a drawing competition entitled “Monuments of the Black Sea countries: Our common cultural heritage”, to be addressed to lower secondary education students from all Member States, in order to bring to the focus the cultural and touristic value of the Black Sea region. In this regard, the Hellenic Republic expressed its readiness to prepare a relevant concept note and, in cooperation with BSEC PERMIS, to take all necessary preparatory steps for the organization of the above event during the second semester of 2021, following the positive example of the drawing contest: “Black Sea: the Sea that Unites Us”, undertaken under the Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office of the BSEC in 2019.

**AGENDA ITEM 9: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

38. No discussion was held under this agenda item.

**AGENDA ITEM 10: ADOPTION OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE INFORMAL MEETING**

39. The Working Group adopted the Report of the Meeting to be submitted to the next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials.