ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

BS/WG/ED/R(2023)2

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

Videoconference, 27 November 2023

1.   The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Education was held online on 27 November 2023.

2.   The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Panagiotis PASSAS, Director General for International and European Affairs, Education for the Hellenic Diaspora and Intercultural Education, Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports of the Hellenic Republic.

3.   Opening Remarks were made by:

Ambassador Dimitrios RALLIS, Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS on behalf of the Secretariat;

Mr. Panagiotis PASSAS, on behalf of the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group.

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
Georgia
Hellenic Republic
Republic of Moldova
Republic of North Macedonia
Russian Federation
Republic of Türkiye
Ukraine

5.   The following BSEC Related Bodies attended the Meeting:

Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC (PABSEC)
International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)

6.   The representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt attended the meeting as the BSEC Observer.

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.   Within this agenda item, the BSEC PERMIS informed about the developments related to the process of updating the "BSEC Economic Agenda", and thanked the Member States for their active involvement in the development of the above-mentioned document.

10.   In addition, the Secretariat briefed on the sixth edition of the Workshop for Young Diplomats from the BSEC Member States on *"The Importance of Connectivity in the Wider Black Sea Region"*, jointly organized by the BSEC PERMIS and the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, Türkiye, held on 4-6 October 2023 in Antalya.

11.   Furthermore, the Secretariat informed about the readiness of the current Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Education - the Hellenic Republic to continue to perform the above mandate for the next two years as of 1 January 2024.

a)   Leaflet / Brochure with a list of digital platforms used by the BSEC Countries for online learning in primary and secondary education (general and vocational) – update on the state of affairs

12.   The Working Group took note of the information provided by the PERMIS on the state of affairs regarding the collection of contributions for the *Leaflet/Brochure with a list of digital platforms used by the BSEC Countries for online learning in primary and secondary education (general and vocational)*.

13.   As so far only three Member States, namely the Hellenic Republic, Romania and the Republic of Serbia, have responded to the proposal and communicated their relevant contributions to the Secretariat, the remaining Member Countries were invited to respond to the above initiative, considering its pertinence as well as the importance of further promoting the spirit of cooperation among young students from the BSEC region.

14.   Furthermore, the representative of the Republic of Bulgaria announced their willingness to join the above initiative, and to that end, promised to send the relevant contribution swiftly.

AGENDA ITEM 3: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITITES AND CHALLENGES – EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

15.   The participants shared insights, experiences and best practices to address the current opportunities and challenges in unlocking the full potential of AI in Education. The recommendations resulting from the discussion will be used to guide future cooperation activities in this area.

16.   Some of the take outs in this context were as follows:

-     Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to address some of the biggest challenges in education today, innovate teaching and learning practices, and ultimately accelerate the progress towards Sustainable Development Goals, whereas making this happen requires system-wide policy adjustments and calls for robust ethical oversight as well as in-depth engagement with practitioners and researchers globally;
-     However, advances in AI-powered solutions carry multiple risks and challenges. Like many other technological innovations, AI is a powerful tool. Wielding correctly can lead to positive educational outcomes, but it can just as easily be abused; therefore, it is essential to define the role and scope of AI in education;
-     AI should be geared to improving learning for every student, empowering teachers and strengthening learning management systems. Beyond this, preparing students and all citizens to live and work safely and effectively with AI is a shared challenge at global level. Future learning and training systems must equip all people with core AI competencies, including understanding of how AI collects and can manipulate data, and skills to ensure safety and protection of personal data. Finally, AI by nature transcends the sectors, the planning of effective AI and education policies requires consultation and collaboration with stakeholders across disciplines and sectors.

17.   To this end, the representatives of the Hellenic Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Türkiye shared comprehensive information on their respective practices. The respective presentations provided by the Member States are attached to the Report as **Annex III and IV**.

18.   The Working Group took note of the proposal of the representative of the Russian Federation to consider organizing a contest for students from the BSEC Member States*: "The BSEC AI Drawing Competition",* based on application of generative AI tools for visual creative content.

AGENDA ITEM 4: COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

19.   The representative of *Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC* (PABSEC) provided the information on the current and upcoming activities of the relevant PABSEC Committees.

20.   The Working Group took note of the information delivered by the representative of the *International Centre for Black Sea Studies* (ICBSS) regarding their relevant activities. In this context, the ICBSS informed of their plans to organize a webinar on "Skills development in the Black Sea Region" to address, inter alia, the very topical issue of the skills gap in the region.

21.   The presentation of the delegation of Ukraine is attached to this Report as **Annex V**. It was followed by a statement of the delegation of the Russian Federation, attached as **Annex VI.**

AGENDA ITEM 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

22.   No discussion was held under this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 6: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

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