



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

BS/WG/C/R(2025)2

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON CULTURE

12 December 2025, online

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Culture was held online on 12 December 2025.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Astghik MARABYAN, Head of the Department of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia.
3. Opening Remarks were made by:
 - Ambassador Dimitrios RALLIS, Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS on behalf of the Secretariat;
 - Ms. Astghik MARABYAN, on behalf of the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group.
4. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - Republic of Bulgaria
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Republic of North Macedonia
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Serbia
 - 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 Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) attended the meeting as the BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partner.

7. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I** to the present Report.

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 UPDATED BSEC ECONOMIC AGENDA “TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA”

9. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Secretariat regarding the state of affairs in the implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda, in particular the relevant provisions under *Goal 8: Development of Tourism, Protection of Cultural Heritage and Promotion of Modern Culture*.

10. The BSEC PERMIS welcomed the written contributions submitted by the Member States outlining relevant national objectives and policies, which served as a basis for enhanced cooperation within the Working Group and for the preparation of the Implementation Report on the fulfilment of the aforementioned provisions of the updated Economic Agenda.

11. In addition, the BSEC PERMIS briefed on the participation of the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Lazar COMANESCU, in the 14th Annual Advisory Forum on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, held in Cappadocia, Türkiye, from 22 to 24 October 2025. In this context, the Secretariat expressed confidence that the next edition of the Forum, to be held in the Republic of Armenia (Yerevan, September 2026), will provide an opportunity to further promote the cultural assets of the BSEC region.

AGENDA ITEM 3: CONSIDERATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD OF 1 JULY 2025 – 30 JUNE 2027, DEVELOPED BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA, THE CURRENT COUNTRY-COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP

12. The Working Group approved the Plan of Action for the period 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2027, submitted by the Country-Coordinator, the Republic of Armenia. The Plan of Action, attached as **Annex III**, sets forth the priorities and principal areas of focus under Armenia’s Coordinatorship of the Working Group, reflects the relevant provisions of the BSEC Economic Agenda, and builds upon the preceding Plan of Action, thereby ensuring continuity with prior undertakings.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CONSIDERATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP ON LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS, INVENTORYING AND TRANSMISSION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE BSEC REGION: EXPERTS’ REFLECTIONS (ONLINE, 14 OCTOBER 2025)

13. The representative of the Country-Coordinator presented the outcomes and main proceedings of the Workshop on “*Legislative Frameworks, Inventorying and Transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the BSEC Region*,” held online on 14 October 2025.

14. Recognizing the effectiveness of this format for substantive knowledge exchange, professional networking, and identifying potential avenues for enhanced cooperation, the

Working Group after constructive discussion decided to convene a follow-up meeting among focal points to further deepen the dialogue, broaden the thematic scope, and explore additional modalities of collaboration. The Secretariat will continue close coordination with the Country-Coordinator on preparations for a second edition of the workshop and will duly communicate full information, including the date and format of the event.

15. The Secretariat recalled the proposal of the Country-Coordinator to establish expert networks specializing in intangible cultural heritage and heritage restoration, and renewed its invitation to those Member States that have not yet nominated experts to consider doing so, with a view to further deepening cooperation and strengthening cultural ties across the BSEC region.

AGENDA ITEM 5: EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND EXPERIENCE-SHARING REGARDING NATIONAL PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

16. Within this framework, the Working Group continued with the exchange of national best practices and recent developments in the field of culture.

17. The representative of the Hellenic Republic presented recent developments in the cultural sector, highlighting enhanced support for contemporary creation, expanded mobility opportunities for artists, and the modernization of digital tools, including the National Registry of Cultural Organizations and the online grant-application system. The delegation emphasized the impact of the digital landscape on cultural production and access, noting ongoing efforts to promote fairness, diversity, and equal visibility for creators, as well as the digital transition of cultural institutions. In this context, the key cultural priorities for 2025 were outlined: accessibility projects for persons with disabilities at monuments and archaeological sites; climate protection measures for safeguarding cultural heritage; “Green Cultural Routes” promoting sustainability and public awareness; the programme “All of Greece, One Culture” linking heritage with contemporary artistic creation; participation in European Heritage Days; and the 2025 grant programmes “Creative Greece” and “Modern Cultural Heritage,” supporting contemporary culture, cultural organizations, and artistic initiatives.

18. The representative of the Russian Federation provided an overview of national initiatives supported by the Ministry of Culture, emphasizing efforts to enhance cultural exchange, creativity, and international cooperation. Key platforms included interregional and international cultural forums, online initiatives, and international song competitions; the Eurasian Cinema Academy and its Eurasian Film Award “Diamond Butterfly”; major cultural events such as the Saint Petersburg International Cultural Forum, the Moscow International Film Festival, and the International Ballet Competition; the InterMuseum platform for museum cooperation; as well as bilateral cultural programmes and active participation in various international organizations.

19. The representative of the Republic of Türkiye provided a brief overview of the 14th Annual Advisory Forum on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, held in Cappadocia on 22–24 October 2025 under the theme “*Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and Landscapes: Advancing Heritage Protection Through Cultural and Sustainable Tourism.*” The Forum brought together more than 320 participants, including representatives of Member States, international organizations, NGOs, regional and local authorities, academia, and the tourism sector.

AGENDA ITEM 6: COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

20. The representative of the *Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC* (PABSEC) informed the Working Group about the current and forthcoming activities of the relevant PABSEC Committees, including the next Committee meeting, which will be held in Tirana in March 2026, dedicated to the theme “*Cultural Diplomacy for Strengthening Relationships and Cooperation in the Black Sea Region.*”

21. The representative of the *International Centre for Black Sea Studies* (ICBSS) briefed the Working Group on the Centre’s recent activities and provided further information on the 9th edition of the *BSEC Month of Culture 2025*, an online programme, held in November 2025, dedicated to the theme “*Black Sea Women in the Arts.*”

22. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the ICBSS for implementing this valuable initiative and underlined its significance in further promoting the cultural assets of the region.

AGENDA ITEM 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23. The Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan made a statement to the effect that Azerbaijan does not object to the Draft Action Plan of the BSEC Working Group on Culture for the period 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2027 as a whole. Furthermore, the same delegation also proposed that in order to ensure that the implementation of the Action Plan remains fully aligned with the mandate of BSEC to amend the first point of the Action Plan under the “General Objectives” section entitled “Safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage and diversity” as follows: “Share the best practices of preserving and promoting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as cultural diversity, in BSEC Countries, and discuss possible cooperation in this sphere“. The delegation additionally proposed with regard to point 4 of the same section entitled “Strengthening regional and international cooperation” that the term “stakeholders” be removed from this text.

24. The delegation of the Republic of Armenia underlined that the Action Plan has been adopted.

25. The representative of the Republic of Bulgaria presented a new joint initiative with UNESCO to establish an Underwater Heritage Institute in the Black Sea region. The Institute will focus on the preservation, research, promotion, and capacity-building related to underwater cultural heritage, with a possible extension to the Caspian Sea and Danube regions. All BSEC Member States will be invited to participate once the formal procedures are completed, and membership will not require ratification of the 2001 UNESCO Convention.

26. The representative of the Republic of Serbia proposed developing of a joint digital exhibition showcasing the links between intangible cultural heritage and industrial design, featuring traditional heritage elements from BSEC Member States. Noting that a similar initiative had been successfully implemented within the CEI framework, the delegation invited Member States to review the concept, providing the link with more detailed presentation for further consideration and cooperation.

AGENDA ITEM 8: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

27. The Working Group on Culture adopted the present Report for its submission to the next Meeting of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials.