



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
Permanent International Secretariat

BS/WGC/R(2026)1

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

Online, 8 October 2026

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Culture was held online on 8 October 2026.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mrs. Astghik MARABYAN, Head of the Department of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia.
3. The Opening Remarks were made by:
 - Ambassador Dimitrios RALLIS, Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS on behalf of the Secretariat;
 - Mrs. 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
 - 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 Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (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 BSEC ECONOMIC AGENDA “TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA” – REPORT OF THE BSEC PERMIS SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BSEC ECONOMIC AGENDA (DECEMBER 2025)

9. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the state of implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda, with particular reference to the relevant provisions under *Goal 8: Development of Tourism, Protection of Cultural Heritage and Promotion of Modern Culture*. In this context, BSEC PERMIS underlined the importance of aligning the activities of the Working Group with the recommendations contained in the first Progress Report of the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General on the Implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda (December 2025).

10. In light of the conclusions and recommendations of the Report, the Secretariat expressed its appreciation to the Country Coordinator and the Working Group on Culture for the progress achieved in advancing the relevant lines of action.

11. BSEC PERMIS welcomed the written contributions submitted by Member States outlining national objectives and policies in the field of culture. The List of Proposals, based on the Member States’ inputs, is attached as **Annex III**, for consideration in the context of the future work of the Working Group.

12. The Secretariat also recalled that 2027 will mark the 35th anniversary of the BSEC, constituting an important milestone in the history and development of the Organization. In this regard, the Secretariat invited Member States to put forward concrete proposals on appropriate ways to commemorate this significant anniversary, as well as to take this information duly into consideration when organizing relevant cultural activities and events at the national level, with a view to contributing to its meaningful and visible commemoration.

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

AGENDA ITEM 3: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND CULTURAL COOPERATION IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

14. The Working Group continued its exchange of views on national developments and best practices in the field of culture, highlighting relevant experiences and approaches with potential for further sharing and cooperation among Member States within the BSEC framework.

15. Within this framework, the representative of the Republic of Armenia provided a brief overview of the 15th Annual Advisory Forum on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, held in Yerevan on 22–25 September 2026 under the theme “*Routes Through Time and Culture: Education for Sustainable Heritage*.” The Forum addressed the role of culture and education as mutually reinforcing drivers of sustainable development and inclusive societies, with particular attention to education for sustainable heritage, youth engagement, digital innovation, and institutional cooperation within the Cultural Routes Programme. The exchange provided an opportunity to consider how the Forum’s outcomes and the wider Cultural Routes framework could contribute to enhanced cooperation among BSEC Member States, particularly by strengthening links between culture, heritage, tourism, education and youth.

16. The representative of the Hellenic Republic highlighted the importance of regional cooperation in the field of cultural tourism, with particular reference to the Cultural Routes Programme of the Council of Europe. In this context, the representative informed about the participation of the Greek Delegation in the Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes, held in Yerevan, which provided an opportunity to further strengthen cooperation with relevant Cultural Routes, particularly those crossing Greece, as well as with other partners.

17. The same representative also informed about Greek participation in the European Union Macro-Regional Week on Mediterranean Coastal Regions, held in Slovenia on 15 September 2026, including in a panel dedicated to cultural tourism, which highlighted the role of Cultural Routes in supporting sustainable development at the macro-regional and local communities levels. In this context, reference was made to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), as well as to the participation of the Hellenic Republic in the EUSAIR pillar for sustainable tourism, and noted that these initiatives could contribute to further synergies and cooperation in the field of cultural tourism and provide relevant experiences for consideration within the framework of the BSEC Working Group.

18. The Representative of Ukraine delivered a statement. The same representative made reference to the Cultural Resilience Alliance, comprising 32 members as of September 2026, and invited other BSEC Member States to consider joining. The representative also presented the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Fund, a multi-donor initiative supporting the protection of Ukraine’s cultural heritage, and expressed appreciation to BSEC Member States that had contributed to the initiative.

19. The representative of the Russian Federation delivered a statement. The representative briefed on initiatives to promote international cultural cooperation through bilateral and multilateral formats, including on the 2026 St. Petersburg International Forum of United Cultures, which brought together representatives from more than 75 countries and addressed the role of culture in fostering mutual understanding. The representative also referred to cooperation initiatives resulting from the Forum and to the Russian Federation’s participation in various international and regional formats supporting cultural exchange and joint projects.

20. The representative of the Republic of Moldova highlighted cultural heritage protection as a national priority, noting the adoption of a new Strategy for Culture and Cultural Heritage in September 2025 and its Implementation Programme in March 2026. In addition, in cooperation with UNESCO, work was underway on a new draft law on the protection of cultural heritage and monuments, supported by training activities with

international experts to strengthen national capacities. The representative also highlighted ongoing cooperation with BSEC Member States and the Hellenic Republic, particularly in cultural heritage protection and the exchange of expertise.

21. The representative of the Republic of Türkiye briefed on the country's experience in the digital transformation of cultural heritage management, highlighting the National Museum Information System (MoES), an integrated digital platform covering museum inventories, conservation processes and the monitoring of illicit trafficking in cultural property, and noting its relevance to Goal 8 of the BSEC Economic Agenda. The representative expressed readiness to share experience and good practices through technical exchanges and informed about the forthcoming *MUES International Webinar Series: "Digital Transformation of Museums and Cultural Heritage Management"*, to be organized online in October/November 2026. The date would be communicated through BSEC PERMIS in due course, and interested Member States were invited to participate.

AGENDA ITEM 4: REGIONAL COOPERATION INITIATIVES ON CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HERITAGE RESTORATION, INCLUDING FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORKSHOP ON LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, INVENTORYING AND TRANSMISSION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE BSEC REGION: EXPERTS' REFLECTIONS (14 October 2025, online)

22. The Working Group considered the main conclusions and experts' reflections stemming from the Workshop, as well as relevant follow-up to previous meetings of the Working Group, as presented by the representative of the Republic of Armenia, in its capacity as Country Coordinator. The Workshop provided an opportunity to exchange experience and good practices and strengthen professional links among participating countries. In this context, Member States were encouraged to build on its outcomes through practical follow-up activities, including expert networking and the exchange of methodologies and experience.

23. The representative of the Republic of Armenia presented an overview of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Armenia in 2026, highlighting the establishment of a dedicated Division for its safeguarding and the expansion of the National Inventory to 120 elements. Particular attention was given to community-based and inclusive measures, including programmes supporting women's empowerment and linking intangible cultural heritage with biodiversity and sustainable development, the 5th International Crafts Festival and the Textile Dialogues international exhibition as platforms for professional exchange and international cooperation, and referred to Armenia's efforts to promote its intangible cultural heritage through UNESCO nomination processes.

24. The representative of the Hellenic Republic provided information on relevant national and regional initiatives and highlighted the Hellenic Ministry of Culture's efforts to implement the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and its work on promoting the visibility and sustainable use of intangible cultural heritage. The representative further referred to Greece's engagement in the EU macro-regional strategies EUSAIR and EUSDR, highlighting cooperation on the Mediterranean Diet as an example of synergies between intangible cultural heritage, cultural tourism and regional cooperation and expressed interest in further developing practical cooperation, exchanges of expertise and joint initiatives within the BSEC framework.

25. The representative of the Russian Federation highlighted national efforts to preserve and restore cultural heritage, including through specialised restoration institutions and workshops. It also referred to the State Catalogue of the Museum Fund, which contained approximately sixty million records as of January 2026, as an important digital tool for documenting and managing cultural assets. The representative further highlighted the Intermuseum Forum as a platform for professional exchange, including on digital transformation and restoration practices, and expressed readiness to share expertise and support further professional exchanges among BSEC Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 5: COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

26. The representative of the *International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)* briefed the Working Group on the Centre's recent activities and recalled, in this context, the Webinar on Culture and Health, entitled "*The Role of Creative Arts in Promoting Mental Wellness*", organized jointly with BSEC PERMIS on 13 May 2026. The webinar provided a platform for the exchange of views on the role of creative arts in fostering mental wellbeing, reducing stigma and promoting inclusivity.

27. The representative further presented the 10th edition of the *BSEC Month of Culture 2026*, to be held online in November 2026 and dedicated to the Photo Competition "*Culture Through My Eyes, Infinite Stories*." It was noted that 12 winning photographs from 10 BSEC Member States would be featured in the ICBSS 2027 Calendar.

28. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the ICBSS for its initiatives in the field of culture and acknowledged their contribution to enhancing awareness of the cultural diversity and heritage of the BSEC region, as well as to promoting wider public engagement with the region's cultural assets.

29. The representative of the *Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC)* of the *Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)* briefed on recent developments concerning the *Toural EU Horizon 2020* project, which focuses on sustainable tourism development in EU rural and remote areas, including in BSEC Member States, with particular emphasis on cultural heritage. The representative further informed of the forthcoming 15th EUSDR Annual Forum, to be held in Sofia on 3–4 November 2026, and highlighted the opportunity for further exchange of experience and identification of synergies with the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategies.

30. The representative of the *Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC)* referred to the 66th Meeting of the PABSEC Committee on Social and Humanitarian Policy, held in Tirana, Republic of Albania, on 4 March 2026 under the theme "*Cultural Diplomacy for Strengthening Relations and Cooperation in the Black Sea Region*," highlighting the role of cultural diplomacy in promoting mutual understanding, cultural heritage, intercultural dialogue and people-to-people contacts. The representative also informed of the 67th Committee Meeting, to be held in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia, on 12 November 2026, under the theme "*Human Capital Retention in the Black Sea Region: Education, Health Workforce, and Digital Skills*."

AGENDA ITEM 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

31. No discussion was held under this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 7: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

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