



# ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

## Permanent International Secretariat

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BS/WG/ED/R(2021)2

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

Videoconference, 25 November 2021

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Education was held online on 25 November 2021.
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 and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.
3. Opening remarks were made by the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazăr COMĂNESCU.
4. The meeting was attended by representatives from 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 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 (online, 14 April 2021).

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: EXCHANGING VIEWS ON RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES: ADDRESSING CURRENT CHALLENGES AND SEIZING AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND THE CRISES**

11. Following the conclusions of the last meeting of the Working Group, the participants continued to exchange views on the state of affairs in the context of addressing the challenges facing the sector due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The delegations of the Hellenic Republic, Romania and the Russian Federation shared comprehensive information on recent developments in their respective countries regarding the measures taken to ensure smooth and sustainable education process.

12. The Working Group took note of the document *“Sharing experiences and exchanging views on possible regional cooperation in support of education in the context of Covid-19 pandemic: tackling ongoing challenges and seizing available opportunities beyond the crises”*, prepared by BSEC PERMIS, based on contributions received on lessons learned and best practices applied in the Member States, in order to promote possible measures and mechanisms with a broader, regional effect to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic (attached as **Annex IV to the Report**).

## **AGENDA ITEM 4: CONSIDERATION OF CONCRETE PROPOSALS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT PROGRAMMES**

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

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

14. The participants took note of the information provided by the Hellenic Republic on 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. At the same time, some of the contributions received so far from the Member States should be updated, as some changes may have occurred in the meantime, inter alia due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

15. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic will send the received contributions to the Member States for the necessary updates and adjustments in order to finalize the text of the brochure. For easier data processing, the Member States were invited to submit relevant data in Word format according to the structure set by the above Hellenic Ministry (attached as **Annex V**) in order to obtain comparable data. The deadline for submitting relevant feedback is **15 February 2022**.

16. The PERMIS reminded of the absence of contributions from some Member States and accordingly invited them to submit their written contributions to the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic (to Ms. Maria FASSARI, e-mail: [des-c2@minedu.gov.gr](mailto:des-c2@minedu.gov.gr)), within the same deadline, as to be included in the final text of the leaflet.

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

17. Upon the proposal of the Republic of Turkey, the Working Group decided to remove the above sub-item from the agenda of the future Working Group meetings.

18. The Working Group took note of the possibility of the further development of this initiative in a bilateral or multilateral format.

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

19. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the Working Group on the development of the BSAARC FA initiative, the current stage of its registration process and the possibilities of the involvement of the interested parties from the Black Sea Region that will become available in the beginning of 2022.

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

#### **d) Other project proposals**

21. The delegation of the Russian Federation proposed to consider organizing an essay competition for students linked to the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the BSEC, which will be celebrated in 2022 entitled “*50 Years of BSEC – a vision of the Youth about the future and role of the Organization, its objectives, challenges and future areas of cooperation*”. The same 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.

22. The Working Group supported the above proposal.

### **AGENDA ITEM 5: YOUTH AND SPORTS ISSUES AND EDUCATION**

23. The participants took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on the topic.

### **AGENDA ITEM 6: OUTCOME OF THE DRAWING COMPETITION ON THE BLACK SEA ENTITLED “CULTURAL MONUMENTS OF THE BSEC COUNTRIES ARE OUR COMMON HERITAGE”, INITIATED BY THE MINISTRY OF**

## **EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC, AS THE COUNTRY-COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION**

24. The delegation of the Hellenic Republic informed about the state of affairs regarding the Drawing Competition entitled “*Cultural Monuments of the BSEC Countries are our Common Heritage*”, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, under their Country-Coordination of the Working Group. The above competition addressed to Secondary Education students aged 16-17 from all Member States, was launched in September and ended on the 5 November 2021, the Concept Note prepared by the above Ministry was communicated to the BSEC Member States by the BSEC PERMIS Note BS/INFO.2021.0333 dated 17 September 2021 (Attached as **Annex VI to the Report**).

25. Given that only three Member States responded to the above call and submitted their contributions within the deadline, a number which is insufficient for the proper selection of the best works, the initiator of the competition – the Hellenic side and the Secretariat decided to extend the deadline for submission of drawing works until **15 February 2022**.

26. Moreover, as the above initiative provides a good platform for further promoting the spirit of cooperation among young generations in the Black Sea region and contributes to raising their awareness of the importance of BSEC, the Secretariat encouraged the Member States to promote the initiative among relevant school students (aged 16-17) to respond positively. Even more so, BSEC PERMIS expressed its readiness to take all necessary preparatory steps, with the assistance of the Country-Coordinator, to exhibit the best works from this, as well as from the previous competition “*Black Sea; the Sea that Unites Us*”, during 2022, in the context of marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Organization.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7: COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION**

27. The representative of PABSEC provided the information on its current and forthcoming activities in the field of education.

28. The Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) Secretary General Prof. Eden MAMUT provided comprehensive information about the ongoing activities and events organized with the aim of addressing the global challenges and better supporting sustainable socioeconomic development in the wider Black Sea region; the presentation is attached as **Annex VII**.

29. In addition, the representative of the Republic of Armenia briefed the participants about the Black Sea Universities Network Congress 2021 on the topic “*Role of Universities in Solving Complex Challenges*” organized as a hybrid event (in Yerevan and online), between 13–15 October 2021, where the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Lazăr COMĂNESCU, addressed the participants with a video message.

30. The representative of the Hellenic Republic shared information about the recent activities of the *European Center for Modern Languages (ECML/CELV) of the Council of Europe, the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE) within the framework of the Enlarged Partial Agreements (EPA) of the Council of Europe and the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED)* and reiterated to the Working Group its proposal to consider and examine possible forms of cooperation with international organizations.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

31. The participants exchanged views on the future activities of the Working Group and identified some concrete ideas and suggestions on how to enrich the next Plan of Actions of the Working Group.

## **AGENDA ITEM 9: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING**

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