



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Doc.: GA50/CC49/REC160/17

RECOMMENDATION 160/2017¹

“Social Protection and Benefits for Young Families in the BSEC Member States”

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) recognizes the social security and the social protection as human rights that are also social and economic necessities. Social welfare measures are powerful tools to prevent and reduce poverty and inequality, helping people to cope with the major risks of life and to better adapt to changing economic, political, demographic and social conditions.
2. In this context, the PABSEC recalls its numerous Recommendations on issues related to social interest: Recommendation 14/1996 on *Social Guarantees during the Transition Period in the PABSEC Member Countries*; Recommendation 61/2002 on *Women’s Participation in the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Life*; Recommendation 67/2002 on *Social Reintegration of Jobless People*; Recommendation 74/2003 on *The Fight against Poverty in the BSEC Member States*; Recommendation 77/2004 on *Improving the Social, Economic and Civil Rights of People with Disabilities (77/2004)*; and Recommendation 100/2007 on *Improvement of the Quality of Life in the BSEC Member States*.

¹ Assembly debate on 30th November (see Doc.: GA50/CC49/REP/17, Report of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee on *Social Protection and Benefits for Young Families in the BSEC Member States*, discussed in Rostov-on-Don on 25 October 2017; Rapporteur: Mr. Zoltan PEK, Member of the Committee, Serbia).

Text adopted by the Fiftieth General Assembly in Kyiv on 30 November 2017

3. The PABSEC appreciates the efforts of the Member States to ensure that their economic development keeps pace with social sustainability by increasingly prioritizing social policies, particularly with regard to the improvement of the social conditions and the fight against poverty among the most vulnerable groups in society, which include young families and their children.
4. The PABSEC emphasizes that the recent economic growth of the BSEC Region provides the means and opportunity to undertake further strengthening of its significant human capital, which is required for sustained development nowadays more than ever before. Investing in this immensely valuable resource will enable the Member States to increase their competitiveness in the global economy, while ensuring the wellbeing of their people.
5. The PABSEC believes that an integrated, holistic approach to framing a family policy requires a more efficient coordination among all the stakeholders, including the state, civil society organizations and the private sector. The family-orientated policy needs to be embedded in human dignity, be gender-sensitive, and respect and uphold the rights of every individual in the family, including children, older persons, and persons with disabilities.
6. The PABSEC shares the global approach that focuses on the implementation of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal 3: “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” with its 13 targets. Goal 3 provides a comprehensive framework for all the major social priorities and is closely linked to other complementary goals. This framework—appropriately tailored to each country’s specific political, legal, economic, social, and cultural circumstances—needs to be collaboratively adopted and implemented by the parliaments of the BSEC Region.
7. The PABSEC considers that the parliaments and the parliamentarians are primarily responsible for providing adequate social protection to their citizens. As pillars of democratic society, national parliaments are entrusted with the primary task of enacting laws, rules, and regulations that foster good governance within societies. One such task is promoting social wellbeing, protection, and security for one of the most vulnerable segments of society: the social unit of young families and their children.
8. The PABSEC reaffirms its commitment to ensure that the parliaments of the Member States take individual and collaborative action towards more efficient initiatives in the field of social protection and benefits, particularly for young families. Such initiatives should promote effective multilateral cooperation, which calls for a dedicated implementation structure and systematic follow-up processes.
9. The PABSEC appreciates the efforts made by the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) within the framework the *BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership*, and its Goal 13: Harmonization and Exchange of Economic and Social Statistical Data and Information. The Assembly endorses the framework of action for Goal 13: developing improved mechanisms for “the exchange of accurate, comparable and timely statistical data and providing support for publication of periodic reports on the economic performance of the BSEC Member States”.

10. The PABSEC welcomes the contribution of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its pioneering role in implementing the UN mandate for promoting universal human economic and social rights. The ILO has been actively supporting policies, providing assistance to countries and partners in order to supply adequate levels of social protection to all members of society, in accordance with the international social security standards.
11. The PABSEC welcomes the adoption of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), at the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference (14 June 2012), which constitutes an important milestone for the ILO. The social protection measures are nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees under which all members are obliged to “ensure at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to health care and to basic income security...”. These social security guarantees should be provided to all adults and children, as defined in national laws and regulations.
12. The PABSEC is keenly aware that the current economic and social climate calls for joint efforts, among which regional cooperation in the field of social policies would be of great value. Enhanced collaboration in formulating and promoting social security goals within the BSEC Region will constitute a means of broadening the common values, interests and objectives of the Member States in line with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and with the major international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ILO social security standards, in particular the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952.
13. The PABSEC believes that the cooperation among the BSEC Member States, by gathering and exchanging information, experience and good practices is necessary to identify the national and the international trends in the field of social reform and to further develop the concept of social protection in the family policy context. A synergetic approach that optimizes the effective collaboration regarding knowledge, traditions, political frameworks, and expertise, would give added value to this process.
14. **Therefore, the PABSEC recommends** that the parliaments and the governments of the BSEC Member States:

At national level

- i. *establish* an institutional mechanism, such as a Ministry of Family Welfare, or a focal point for family policy within an existing Ministry, with sufficient organizational and human resources capacity;
- ii. *promote* the family unit as a policy priority and develop family protection measures, with special consideration given to young families;
- iii. *provide* young parents with access to employment resources and training skills while concurrently providing educational resources for their dependent children;
- iv. *encourage* the establishment of tax relief to working families by providing benefits through housing and child-related tax credits that would lift many of them above the poverty line;
- v. *integrate* the family as an important social unit into all social development policies, national development plans and poverty reduction strategies;

- vi. *introduce* family studies and family counselling at different instructional levels—such as university, school and community - with qualified personnel providing family social services and incorporating contemporary practices in family counselling;
- vii. *promote and fund* high-quality early childhood care and education, and provide cash benefits and adequate services for childcare arrangements, such as childcare centres;
- viii. *facilitate* an effective balance of work and family life by promoting gender equality within the family and effecting appropriate changes in working conditions—including regulatory and incentive-based mechanisms in the private sector—and promoting family-friendly working schedules for parents of young children;
- ix. *develop* effective ways and means to support young families with low incomes;
- x. *build and budget for* a national, inclusive and universal social protection system so as to entrench social protection in society and improve the overall socioeconomic security of families, particularly young families;
- xi. *stimulate* public debate and consultations on family-oriented and child-sensitive social protection policies;
- xii. *assist* families in general, and young families in particular, with cash or tax benefits, as well, as an allowance for education, housing and healthcare;

At regional level

- xiii. *provide* more systematic regional data on family and child wellbeing, including data on major family issues, best practices in policy responses to family problems, and (where possible), their effects;
- xiv. *invite* the Member States to facilitate the exchange of effective guidelines, regulatory procedures and best practices in the promotion of family policies;
- xv. *identify and ensure* follow-up support for all factors that enable or motivate constructive family policy development;
- xvi. *encourage* regional social policies, including cooperation on social protection issues, and promote regional strategies for the implementation of a minimal social protection package;
- xvii. *work* within the UN system for a social protection basis or a minimum social protection package, ensuring access to basic social services, accommodation and protection of the poor and vulnerable social segments;
- xviii. *align* national legislation and economic policies across the region to create a sustainable family-orientated legal and policy framework for social protection;
- xix. *recommend* that all the relevant UN departments, funds and programs should contribute to the development of strategies aimed at strengthening family policies, taking into account that the family social unit is a vital partner for the achievement of the SDGs;
- xx. *advocate* for a joint mechanism of international financial institutions and of the UN system, for the common articulation and implementation of additional financing for the most vulnerable units of society, including young families.

15. **The PABSEC invites** the BSEC Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.