

RECOMMENDATION 133/2013*

Benefits and Perspectives of Cooperation at the Postgraduate Level among Universities of the BSEC Member States

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) is fully aware that academic cooperation and mobility of students, lecturers, and researchers is of utmost importance for the BSEC Member States as a means to forge stronger educational and scientific ties and to promote peace, mutual understanding, and tolerance among the countries in the region.
2. The issue of academic cooperation has been among the priorities of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation since its establishment. As the BSEC Charter stipulates, “the BSEC will promote the cooperation among academic communities, scholars and scientists of the Member States, with the aim to promote the principles and objectives of the BSEC within their competence”.
3. Promotion of academic, educational and scientific cooperation in the Black Sea region as a contribution to the development of the human and cultural dimension of the Black Sea Cooperation process has also been one of priorities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
4. The PABSEC has, on several occasions, discussed issues pertaining to the development of educational cooperation among the Member States and, more specifically, to the cooperation of the academic communities as part of the BSEC process. In this regard, PABSEC recalls its Recommendation 10/1995 on “*Cooperation among the BSEC Member Countries for the Improvement of Education*”; Recommendation 27/1998 on “*Cooperation of the Academic Communities of the BSEC Member Countries and its Legal Framework*”; Recommendation 31/1998 on “*Mutual Recognition of Higher Education Diplomas by the BSEC Member Countries*”; Recommendation 56/2001 on the “*Black Sea*

* The Assembly debate on 11 July 2013 (see Doc. GA41/CC40/REP/13 – Report on *Benefits and Perspectives of Cooperation at the Postgraduate Level among Universities of the BSEC Member States*), discussed by the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee at its Fortieth Meeting in Chisinau on 26 March 2013 – Rapporteur: Mrs. Ekaterina Kuzmicheva (Russia).

Universities Network: Contribution to the BSEC Academic Cooperation"; Recommendation 97/2007 on *"The Bologna Process and the reforms of higher educational systems in the BSEC countries"*; and Recommendation 125/2011 on *"Lifelong Learning in the BSEC Member States"*.

5. The PABSEC commends on the reforms undertaken by the Member States within the framework of the European Higher Education Area and the increase in bilateral cooperation in the field of postgraduate studies and research between the BSEC Member States. At the same time, the PABSEC notes that several legal, institutional, financial, and other barriers continue to impede more extensive forms of cooperation, and stresses that greater efforts are required to overcome these barriers.
6. The PABSEC acknowledges the work carried out within the BSEC framework, which has been created by more than twenty years' experience in the exchange of information and the implementation of best practices among its Member States on their higher education systems, institutions, programs, and diploma recognition procedures. The PABSEC considers that the BSEC framework is now robust enough to build on its experience and to proceed with the institutionalization of cooperation in the field of postgraduate education at the regional level. In this context, it welcomes the *BSEC Economic Agenda — Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership* (June 2012), which represents the BSEC's renewed strategy on short- and long-term cooperation in the BSEC region and which reiterates the support of the Member States for joint university research projects and postgraduate programs.
7. **Therefore, the PABSEC recommends** that the parliaments and governments of the BSEC Member States:
 - i. *accede to* and *ensure* the implementation of European and international legal instruments on recognition of higher education qualifications, particularly the 1997 UNESCO/Council of Europe Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in Europe;
 - ii. *cooperate* in the development of national frameworks of qualifications in order to ensure the compatibility of educational systems in the BSEC region;
 - iii. *establish* a more comprehensive legal framework by expanding the basis of bilateral agreements on mutual recognition of diplomas, academic mobility, and development of joint postgraduate programs;
 - iv. *involve* national parliaments in a collaborative effort to remove barriers to further cooperation by introducing more flexible legislation;
 - v. *encourage* mobility by overcoming challenges to the effective exercise of free movement, with particular attention to students and academic staff;
 - vi. *consider* the prospects of development of closer cooperation among the higher education establishments in postgraduate education and establishment of a specialized center for realization of the grand-scale regional educational and scientific projects using the best resources educational resources of the universities of the BSEC member states;

- vii. *establish* the priorities of the procedural measures that the universities of the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) should implement in the near future;
 - viii. *encourage* the organization of workshops and seminars to promote the use of good practices;
 - ix. *support* the creation of postgraduate programs in Black Sea Studies in the English language, in order to encourage and facilitate wider student participation;
 - x. *launch* new scholarship programs in key regional sectors such as energy, information and communication technologies, transport, and trade;
 - xi. *harness* existing mechanisms for enhancing regional cooperation in the sphere of higher education, in particular, the BSEC Portal on Education, to promote joint scientific projects and programmes as well as to share good practices in postgraduate education and strengthening of the educational potential in the region;
 - xii. *promote* cooperation in higher education between the European Union and the BSEC so as to enable the development of joint programs in areas of mutual concern;
 - xiii. *To consider* the possibility to give right to the educational establishments to establish their branches and (or) representations on the territories of other BSEC Member States that will carry out their work in conformity with international treaties and agreements, as well as the national legislations.
8. **The PABSEC** invites the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider its Recommendation.