

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC

Doc. GA 5025/98

THE TWELFTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RECOMMENDATION 31/1998¹

on

**The Mutual Recognition of Higher Education Diplomas
by the BSEC Member Countries**

1. The issue of the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications is gaining prominence in the Black Sea region as more and more students come to study from one BSEC country to another. These students would naturally seek diploma recognition after completing studies in order to obtain employment or continue their studies.
2. The Assembly recalls its Recommendation 10/1995 on “Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries for the Improvement of Education” which proposed the elaboration of multilateral and bilateral arrangements on the mutual recognition and equivalence of academic courses, diplomas, degrees, and other education-related certificates.
3. Furthermore, Recommendation 27/1998 on “Cooperation among the Academic Communities of the BSEC Member Countries and Its Legal Framework”, adopted by the Assembly in Bucharest in June 1998, urged the national parliaments and governments “to promote the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements promoting academic mobility in the Black Sea region through the mutual recognition of qualifications related to higher education; to consider the accession to the relevant Council of Europe and UNESCO conventions; pending the conclusion of such agreements, to promote the exchange of information concerning the recognition of diplomas and degrees”.
4. Both the BSEC and the PABSEC have on many occasions stressed the need to facilitate the free movement of businessmen within the Black Sea region. Academic mobility and the free movement of students, lecturers and researchers are also very important for the Black Sea countries in order to contribute to forging stronger educational and scientific ties, as well as promoting peace and mutual understanding among the nations in the area.
5. Promoting academic mobility, the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications by the BSEC member countries will open their education systems to each other and to the outside world, allowing young people to obtain education abroad and enriching them with international experience. This will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing the human potential

¹ The Assembly debate on 10 December, 1998 (See Doc. GA 5024/98 - Report on the Mutual Recognition of Higher Education Diplomas by the BSEC Member Countries, adopted by the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee at its Eleventh Meeting in Sofia on 23-24 September 1998; Rapporteur: Mrs. Juliet Kazhoyan)

of the Black Sea region and raising its competitiveness in tomorrow's global labour market.

6. The diversity of education systems in the countries of the Black Sea region reflects their cultural, social, political, religious and economic diversity, an asset which should be fully respected. The BSEC countries should endeavour to enable their citizens to benefit from this rich heritage of diversity by facilitating access by the students of one country to the educational resources of other countries.
7. Bilateral and multilateral arrangements in the recognition of academic qualifications should be encouraged, following the conclusion of the first agreement on the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications between Romania and Moldova. Furthermore, cooperation between universities as well as within the framework of the Black Sea Universities' Network could make a significant contribution to promoting academic mobility and mutual recognition of higher education qualifications in the region.
8. The BSEC member countries would benefit from joining the existing international and European arrangements on diploma recognition, first of all, the 1997 UNESCO/Council of Europe Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region.
9. The Assembly recommends to the Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC Member Countries:
 - i. to step up information exchange among the member countries on their higher education systems, institutions, programmes and diploma recognition procedures;
 - ii. to this end, consider organising working groups and/or workshops for in-depth study of the issue of the diploma recognition in the area;
 - iii. to urge the intensification of the efforts of the national authorities of the member countries with a view to signing bilateral and multilateral agreements in this field with other BSEC member countries;
 - iv. to study the possibility of a regional convention on the recognition of higher educational qualifications in the BSEC member countries;
 - v. to encourage cooperation steps between universities as well as within the framework of the Black Sea Universities' Network aiming to promote academic mobility and mutual recognition of higher education qualifications in the region;
 - vi. to invite the BSEC member countries and the Black Sea University Foundation to set up in its framework a coordinating centre in charge of monitoring issues related to the recognition of diplomas in the BSEC member countries, including formulation of criteria, elaboration of data bases, as well as normative instruments in the field. The UNESCO/CEPES is invited to provide qualified expertise to the coordinating centre;
 - vii. to accede to the international and European legal instruments on the recognition of higher education qualifications and to ensure the implementation of these convention through establishing and building up appropriate mechanisms, particularly those belonging to the ENIC network (European Network of National Information Centres on Academic Recognition and Mobility);
 - viii. develop cooperation in this field with UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Union and other interested institutions and countries.
10. The Assembly invites the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Participating States to consider this Recommendation.