

Doc. GA26/CC25/REP/05

**THE TWENTY FIFTH MEETING OF  
CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**REPORT\***

**ON**

**“CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF EU  
ENLARGEMENT: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE BLACK SEA REGION”**

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*\* Text approved by the Twenty Sixth General Assembly in Tirana on 24 November 2005*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The promotion of educational, cultural and social cooperation in the Black Sea region as a contribution to the development of the human, cultural and educational dimension of the Black Sea Cooperation process has been one of priorities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
2. Aiming to develop cooperation between the BSEC member states in the field of education, culture and social affairs, the relevant PABSEC Committee has, in particular, addressed the following issues: “The Role of Culture in the Development of the BSEC Region”, “Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries for the Improvement of Education”, “The Social Problems of the Transition Period in the PABSEC Member Countries” as well as “The Black Sea Universities Network: Contribution to the BSEC Academic Cooperation” and the Assembly adopted corresponding Recommendations 10/1995, 14/1996, 56/2001, 70/2003.
3. The Assembly has exerted a substantial influence on the expansion of bilateral and multilateral relations among the participating states of BSEC. During the last decade, the contribution of PABSEC has offered optimal opportunities from a better approach towards the European Union enlargement.
4. The European Union experienced significant changes in the year 2004 as it enlarged from 15 to 25 members and continued work on a new constitutional treaty to institute internal reforms and further EU political integration.
5. Since the European enlargement is of vital importance for all BSEC Member States, the Twenty Fourth Meeting of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee, held in Izmir on 16 May 2005 decided to take up the subject of “Cultural, Educational and Social aspects of EU enlargement: consequences for the Black Sea region” as the main item of the agenda of the Twenty Fifth Meeting in Thessaloniki on 5-6 October 2005.
6. Contributions for the Report and Recommendation have been received from the national delegations of Armenia, Romania and Ukraine. Reference materials used for the preparation of the Report were obtained by the International Secretariat and through the Internet.

## **II. BSEC ACTIVITIES**

7. The BSEC has been able to define major goals, obtain international recognition as a dynamic regional initiative with well developed intergovernmental, interparliamentary, business, banking and academic dimensions. By launching collaboration in spheres of common interest, the BSEC has proved to be a useful forum for a broad multi-cultural dialogue on various issues of regional cooperation.
8. The dynamics of the emerging new European Architecture open up the potential for effective partnerships with BSEC. BSEC can play a major role in providing the necessary

links between the enlarged EU and Eastern Europe, the Caspian region and Eastern Mediterranean.

9. Guided by the goal to contribute to the formation of the new European architecture, the BSEC drew up in 1999 a BSEC-EU Platform of cooperation. This defines means of cooperation for implementing the strategic objectives of the BSEC.

10. The implementation of the BSEC economic agenda through collective activities and efforts will contribute to a more dynamic, sustainable development of each member state, and of the region as a whole, to the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and civil society, and to the wider goals of European integration and stability.

11. In the new century a major goal of the BSEC will be to put knowledge to the forefront of its activities by taking advantage of the latest achievements in science and technology. Special programs are being developed by the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology with the aim of surveying on-going research, and identifying promising areas related to the real needs of the Member States. The contribution of the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) and other Related Bodies and Affiliated Centers will be substantial.

12. A strong and effective partnership between the BSEC and the EU based on coinciding interests and common values, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms must be developed and maintained. Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament contributes to the promotion of such a partnership.

### **III. EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT**

#### **A) The New European Union and the New Neighbours**

13. The Union of 25 brought together a great wealth of languages, identities and cultures. It can also be said that it brought a change of paradigm: the human factor is more important than the purely economic thinking, which along with globalization, environmental issues and the cohesion and solidarity of peoples and regions, the new dimension of Europe becomes evident.

14. The challenge is to build a Europe reaching beyond the sphere of economy to promote sustainable development as a means to meet citizens' expectations concerning quality of life and cultural and social diversity. In all these aspects, education, culture and social affairs have a decisive role to play. A powerful knowledge-based economy cannot develop without a high level of education, as social cohesion cannot exist without tolerance and respect for the culture of others.

15. In March 2003, the European Commission presented its Communication "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours". This communication described the new challenges and opportunities facing the enlarged European Union in relation to its new neighbours. EU enlargement has led to the creation of new EU border areas, in which economic, political and social disparities will create new challenges. The new changes in the geopolitical

position of the European Union affects not only the EU institutions and Member States, but also has profound implications for the regions. In recognition of this, the Commission presented a Communication in July 2003 entitled "Paving the Way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument".

16. This set out a proposal for the development of a new financial instrument to support cross-border and interregional co-operation between regions within the EU and their counterparts along the external borders. Both the policy and the programming concepts for the European Neighbourhood Policy have been further developed in the Commission's Strategy Paper issued in May 2004.

17. The objective of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is to share the benefits of EU enlargement with the neighbouring countries in order to strengthen stability, security and well-being in the whole region. It is designed to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours and to offer them the opportunity to participate in various EU activities. The European Neighbourhood Policy covers the following countries of BSEC region: Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia. It does not apply to those countries that have a perspective of becoming members of the EU in the foreseeable future, such as the countries of the Western Balkans. Turkey is also not included, as it is pursuing its relations with the EU in the context of the pre-accession framework. The Neighbourhood Programmes will focus upon the following priorities:

- promoting sustainable economic and social development in the border areas
- working together to address common challenges, in fields such as environment, public health, and the prevention of and fight against organised crime
- Ensuring efficient and secure borders
- Promoting local 'people-to-people' type actions

## **B) Educational Aspects of European Union Enlargement**

18. The Bologna process, which is a pledge by 29 countries to reform the structures of their higher education systems, in a convergent way. The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 involves six actions relating to:

1. a system of academic grades which are **easy to read and compare**, including the introduction of the diploma supplement (designed to improve international "transparency" and facilitate academic and professional recognition of qualifications);
2. a system essentially based on **two cycles** : a first cycle geared to the employment market and lasting at least three years and a second cycle (Master) conditional upon the completion of the first cycle;
3. a system of **accumulation and transfer of credits**;
4. **mobility** of students, teachers and researchers;
5. cooperation with regard to **quality assurance**;
6. the **European dimension** of higher education.

19. The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 recognized the important role of Education and Training as an integral part of economic and social policies, as an instrument for strengthening Europe's competitive power in the world, but also for ensuring the cohesion of member states' societies, and the full development of its peoples in societal and economic developments. The following European Councils made further steps towards the strengthening of education and training policies. And the Heads of State called for more efforts in order to ensure that European Education systems will be a world quality reference by 2010.

20. Obviously, the first responsibility for education policies is, and should remain, in the initiatives of Member States. It is well understood that Europe's role in education matters is to support, not to dictate. This is especially true at a time when Europe is more and more confronted with the challenge of globalization, where the identities of member states should be ensured.

21. The European Union does not intend to implement "common policies" in education. It does intend, however, to stimulate cooperation in this area by implementing actions on a European level through, for example, the Socrates Community programme (for education) and the Leonardo da Vinci programme (for professional training). The EU also fosters cooperation by implementing Community legislation promoting political cooperation among Members, through recommendations and communication (evaluation of the quality of school and university programmes or cooperation with third countries), and in employment documents, or pilot projects.

22. In 1976 the Ministries of Education decided for the first time to implement an information network to enable better understanding of the educational policies and institutions in the nine countries making up the European Union at the time. For this reason, a European education information network, the Eurydice programme, was launched in 1980. In 1986 attention shifted from information exchange to student exchange with the launch of the ERASMUS programme. However, it was only in 1992 that the educational sector was formally recognised by the Maastricht Treaty as a legitimate competence of the EU.

23. With the Maastricht Treaty, the EU launched a series of educational programmes targeting young people. "Socrates", underway as of 1995, promotes mobility of European citizens within the Union in academic areas and is mainly aimed at university students and professors, teachers, aids and secondary school students. The aim of "Leonardo da Vinci", established in 1994, is to contribute to the professional training of young people, even outside the school system.

24. At the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, the European Union announced its new strategic objective for the upcoming decade: to become the economy with most competitive and dynamic knowledge-base in the world, capable of developing economic growth supported by new and better job opportunities and more social cohesion. This objective is pursued by strengthening political cooperation between the states in the areas of education and training. The Barcelona European Council (March 2002) reinforced this ambition, stating that education is one of the foundations of the European social model

and that the European system must become a world-wide reference point for quality by 2010.

25. The main Community objectives in the field of education are as follows:

- foster the European dimension in this field, in particular by promoting the teaching of the various languages of the Member States;
- promote students and teacher mobility while favouring foreign study programmes;
- facilitate cooperation between institutions active in education;
- promote the exchange of information and experience within the Community;
- promote student exchange programmes;
- aid the development of distance learning;
- favour basic training and updating programmes;
- assist so-called "e-learning" by creating a development programme of teaching systems via computer;
- halve the number of people between 18 and 24 who have completed only the first level of high school and do not go on with any form of education or training by 2010.

### **C) CULTURAL ASPECTS OF EU ENLARGEMENT**

26. Since the Maastricht Treaty went into effect, the European Union has been implementing cultural actions aimed at participating in the cultural development of the various Members. Two articles in the Treaty refer to culture. The first article forms the legal basis for various cultural actions; the second takes into consideration the specific cultural aspects within the area of European economic exchanges.

27. In this area, the European Union also fosters cooperative action between those operating in cultural sectors in the Member States, or rather complements their initiatives, but does not compel them to harmonise their cultural policies. Community action deals with four areas:

- improvement of knowledge and diffusion of European culture and history;
- conservation and protection of Europe's cultural heritage;
- non-commercial cultural exchange;
- artistic and literary creativity, including audiovisual fields.

28. European enlargement has posed new challenges to European Union cultural policies. With the increase of cultural and linguistic variety within the Union, protection of cultural minorities will play an ever more important role in the 25-member European Union

29. "Culture 2000" framework programme is now involving cultural operators from more than 30 countries and supporting every year more than 200 cooperation projects. These are artistic and cultural projects that have a European dimension, both in the conceptual stage and in the organization of and participation in the project.

30. These supported activities include festivals, co-productions, European capitals for culture, exhibitions, artistic creations, tours, conferences, etc. They involve hundreds of cultural operators in various cultural and artistic fields. "Culture 2000" is an instrument to promote the intercultural dialogue, a priority for the Commission. The 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 has shown more than ever the importance and urgency of developing an approach that places the search for better mutual understanding between cultures at the heart of EU action. Cultural dialogue and cooperation are a powerful way to build bridges between people.

## **D) THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF EU ENLARGEMENT**

31. The possibility of joining the European Union understandably raises expectations among the people of the candidate countries, making considerable efforts in order to become members of the European 'club'. The transition from state economy to a social market economy gives rise to inequalities and unemployment, which also causes some more specific problems to surface: lack of education in rural areas, great regional differences in health care services, etc.

32. Developments require an in-depth discussion about the accession strategy, not in order to make it even more difficult for the candidate countries, but in order to avoid dramatic social consequences and the build-up of dangerous frustrations. If the Black Sea member countries wish to enter the European architecture and want the enlargement to be a success, it is clearly necessary to have a thorough debate on the social aspects of the accession process.

33. More than ever, the European Social Agenda is placing emphasis on two aspects: that social and employment policies should be treated with the same importance as economic policy and that social policy should be conceived as a productive factor in the socio-economic triangle.

34. The European Union has social standards that are higher than those of other developed economies, and the member states organize substantial financial transfers through social security and taxation, which help curb poverty and isolation and which guarantee a decent standard of living for all citizens. Such social transfers constitute an important factor of social cohesion.

35. Social policy should therefore be at the core of the discussion of enlargement. In this respect, improving the quality of life and introducing social norms should be one of the goals of the Union's policy as well. Among other things, it is important to understand the place that European employment policy and European social legislation occupy in the discussion on enlargement. The questions that emerge are: How important is social policy- in all its aspects- in the socio-economic criteria of Copenhagen and what is the link between the need for social convergence and economic convergence?

## **IV. THE EFFECTS OF EU ENLARGEMENT IN THE BSEC COUNTRIES**

36. **Albania** after fifteen years of legislative, institutional and economic reforms is at the final stage of negotiation for signing the Stabilization and Association agreement with the European Union. At University level Albania takes an active part in EU inter-university exchange programme TEMPUS. Albanian universities are collaborating with their EU counterparts in joint projects and individual grants for students and professors are being provided. Albania also aims at supporting the development of vocational education in the country.

37. **Armenia** views the process of enlargement to the EU as an opportunity to develop closer relations including economic integration and deepening of political interaction. The European Union and Armenia intend to use this opportunity to expand and stabilize their relations, to ensure their security as well as prosperity. This approach is based on the principles of partnership, entrepreneurship and differentiation. The EU policy of European Neighbourhood pursues ambitious objectives based on the commitment of all parties to universal values and implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms. Armenia is suggested to develop intensive relationships with the EU in the field of politics, security, economy and culture, being involved at the same time in extensive foreign cooperation and sharing responsibility for settlement and prevention conflicts. The Republic of Armenia joined the Bologna process in May 2005 which stipulates integration of the higher education system of the Republic of Armenia into European higher education before the year 2010. In 2003 the Republic of Armenia accessed the European Revised Social Charter, which sets up the norms for the European space and regulates social insurance, health care, education, as well as labour relations.

38. **Azerbaijan** shall focus in the field of education on updating higher education and training systems including the system of certification of higher educational establishments and diplomas of higher education. It shall also promote teaching in the field of European Studies within the appropriate institutions. With regards to social protection Azerbaijan shall pay special attention to this cooperation which inter alia shall include cooperation in planning and implementing social protection reforms in the country. These reforms shall aim to develop in the Republic of Azerbaijan methods of protection intrinsic to market economies and shall comprise all forms of social protection. In the field of culture, Azerbaijan shall promote, encourage and facilitate cultural cooperation.

39. **Bulgaria** established relations with the EU in 1988. In 1993, the European agreement on association was signed before entering into force in 1995. In December 1995, Sofia submitted its application for EU membership, and two years later preliminary negotiations were launched. Accession negotiations between Bulgaria and the EU started on 15 February 2000. Bulgaria concluded its accession talks on 15 June 2004, six months ahead of schedule. The technical closure of talks on the final two negotiating chapters had been completed on 14 June 2004. The country joins the EU as a full member on 1 January 2007.

40. **Georgia** updates higher education and training systems including the system of certification of higher educational establishments and diplomas of higher education. Where appropriate institutional frameworks and plans of cooperation will be established building on participation of Georgia in the Community's TEMPUS programme. In the

field of culture, Georgia shall exchange information and experience in the field of conservation and protection of monuments, sites and museum values. Georgia should also exchange cultural knowledge between institutions, artists and other persons working in the area of culture.

41. **Moldova** has also joined the Bologna Process. Moreover, in February 2005 signed the Action Plan with the European Union which includes some fundamental measures that should increase the collaboration of the European Union. This agreement is based on the development of democratic, legal and economic parameters that should help Moldova to integrate into the European Union. The EU integration is very important for Moldova and the new Moldovan parliament has unanimously adopted the Joint Declaration of Political Partnership in order to implement the European Union objectives.

42. **Romania** fully shares the principle of cultural policies, which provide for the full respect of the cultural diversity, with special emphasis on the common European cultural patrimony. Romanian legislation is fully harmonized with the acquis of cultural policies. Romania has signed individual agreements with several member states of the EU, but not in the context of its accession to the European Union. From 2004 Romania participated as observer to EUROSTUDENT project, a monitoring system with regard to the socio-economic living conditions of higher education students in the EU member countries.

43. For Romania, the EU membership will have a major impact on the social field and the main problem is the cost of the integration, although it is estimated that this cost will be lower than the cost of non-integration. The high cost of the integration will reflect on the social field and on the quality of the life of the Romanian population. Another important problem is the unemployment and the training of workers for new professions that are more profitable. The population will be very affected by the integration and there is a need for greater flexibility to adapt to the new conditions from the labor market. Elderly people will be especially affected as they lose their jobs and will not have the desire to learn new professions and they will not have the possibility to find new jobs. In that sense, a large part of the Romanian working population will have to change the field of activity and also professions.

44. On the other hand, after EU integration, Romania will benefit from the EU social policies. Thus, Romania will receive financial support and will benefit from the four EU fundamental freedoms: free movement of persons, capital, goods and services. Although there is a possibility that a big part of the Romanian workers will go to work in other EU member states, Romania expects that due to the inflow of foreign investments, there will be a rise of interest of the Romanian workers for the labor market of Romania. A new institutional framework will be created and consolidated, based on European modern values and principles to develop flexible evaluation mechanism in a multi-dimensional manner for the problems of the citizens in the social field.

45. The legal basis for **Russia**-EU relations is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of 1994, which came into force in December 1997 for an initial period of ten years. The main idea of the Agreement is that it established a new political dialogue between Russia and the EU, based on the mutual understanding that the two parties are strategic partners. The major recent developments are: i)The **EU-Russia**

**Summit in St.-Petersburg** on 31 May, 2003, that gave a new impetus to strategic partnership and set the basis for launching the concept of four Common Spaces; ii) The **12<sup>th</sup> EU-Russia Summit in Rome** on 6 November, 2003, that confirmed all the agreements the two parties came to at the St.-Petersburg Summit and adopted the concept of Common European Economic Space, which should lay the basis for the promotion of privileged, equal trade and economic relations between Russia and the EU - an important field of cooperation given deep positive interdependence of the economies of the two sides.

46. Stable cooperation is now underway between Russia and the EU in order to work out the necessary implementation plans for these common spaces. That implies active interaction in the field of fight against organized crime, illegal migration, establishment of a visa-free regime, joint actions in international affairs such as fight against international terrorism.

47. The European Commission in April 2005 recommended the opening of negotiations on a stabilization and association agreement with **Serbia and Montenegro**, the first step towards the country's EU integration. In this context, the European Commission has approved a Feasibility Report assessing the readiness of Serbia and Montenegro to negotiate a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. Serbia and Montenegro has made sufficient progress in meeting the prerequisites. This agreement will establish the first contractual relationship between Serbia and Montenegro and the European Union.

48. The **Ukrainian** legislation in the field of culture, cultural industry and intellectual property with that of the European Union testifies to the fact that in many respects the Ukrainian legal basis satisfies European standards. However, there are significant differences, which require profound research for further harmonization of the Ukrainian legal norms with European ones. At the same time, some of the protection instruments specified in current Ukrainian legislation will possibly have to be neglected for the sake of establishing a common European space.

49. In the process of European integration Ukraine will get more possibilities for participation in common European cultural programs and activities and will be able to promote its cultural product in the common European market. The cultural values of the peoples of Europe that will boost development of the Ukrainian culture will become more accessible for the Ukrainians. European integration will foster better protection and application of the copyright in Ukraine.

## V. CONCLUSION

50. With the integration of 10 new members in 2004, the European Union entered a genuinely new historical stage. There is no doubt that this event has given a new rhythm to the EU by deeply modifying not only its geography, but also its policies and institutions. The enlargement united 445 million Europeans and it is the result of 50 years of joint efforts in building a Europe in which a half century of peace and prosperity has made it possible to unite countries and citizens with democracy, freedom and the respect of human rights as its foundations.

51. It is important to mention that the most fundamental issue that needs to be tackled is education. Because it is education which creates the prerequisites of solving any social problems as well as injustices and can create cultural integration and toleration among both the existing and the future member states of the European Union.

52. In terms of advantages and shortcomings of the European integration impact on the cultural identity, it is necessary to stress that the European legislation ensures significant protection instruments and mechanisms in the field of culture in member states and Europe in general that can help to protect and enhance the cultural identity.

53. Culture is one of the main factors of national self-preservation, therefore the process of bringing it in line with the European standards must proceed carefully without losing the national identity.

54. The present EU full member states and the future member states from the Black Sea region will also go through many transitional steps before reaching the desired goal.

55. The enlargement of the European Union is a major challenge for the social coherence of European construction. This challenge can only be met if there is a positive political will. The future candidate countries-especially those of the Black Sea region- must be suitably, but closely involved with the open coordination strategy regarding employment and the fight against poverty and social exclusion. This should help them to set up efficient and effective solidarity systems themselves, close to what has been achieved in the best performing member states of the European Union. This system, should serve as a model for Central and Eastern European countries, so that, in the long run they meet the high expectations of their peoples.

56. The Assembly believes that the process of enlargement will be able to provide to BSEC members states the opportunity to develop closer relations with the European Union, expand and stabilize their relations, ensure their security and provide prosperity. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation realizes that the European integration will benefit BSEC member states but under the same perspective it expresses the belief that BSEC member states should seek to protect their educational, cultural and social identity.