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REPORT*

on

“Lifelong Learning in the BSEC Member States”

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In recent years, lifelong learning has become a dominant theme of education and training policies of national governments and has been endorsed by major intergovernmental policy actors. It is defined as an all-purpose learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence. It is a life-wide activity, which has not to do only with formal education, but also with informal ways of learning and which addresses both youth and adult learners.

2. The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation recognizes that cooperation in the field of education positively contributes to further bilateral and multilateral cooperation and that education and training play a key role in the European integration process while promoting sustainable development, stability and prosperity in all BSEC Member States.

3. From the very beginning of its operation, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation placed great emphasis on educational issues. The wide range of relevant Recommendations adopted by the Assembly include:

- Ratification and Implementation of the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information (3/1994)
- Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries of the Improvement Education (10/1995)
- Cooperation of the Academic Communities of the BSEC Member Countries and its Legal Framework (27/1998)
- Mutual recognition of Higher Education Diplomas by the PABSEC Member-Countries (31/1998)
- Black Sea Universities Network: Contribution to the BSEC Academic Cooperation (56/2001)
- Cultural, educational and social aspects of the EU enlargement: consequences for the Black Sea Region (86/2005)
- The Bologna Process and the reforms of higher educational systems in the BSEC countries (97/2007)

4. New challenges brought along with globalization and the knowledge economy, force individuals to update and adapt their skills and competences to new work environments and forms of social organization. In this context, some aspects of the established educational systems are put to question and the need to develop more holistic and comprehensive systems of learning has become obvious.

5. With a view to exploring ways of developing education in line with the lifelong learning approach, the Cultural Educational and Social Affairs Committee decided to discuss “Lifelong Learning in the BSEC Member States” as the main agenda item of its 37th Meeting. Contributions to the Report were received from the national delegations of Azerbaijan, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Turkey. Reference material was also obtained from the websites of UNESCO, UNDP, EU, OECD and other official institutions.

II. EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL IN THE BSEC REGION

6. During the 1990s, most of the BSEC Member States faced the transition from centrally planned to market economies, which marked a period of sharp economic decline. The provision of basic needs, including education, deteriorated for many people. Job placement upon completion of education, and security once employed, were no longer guaranteed as they had been in the era of central planning. Some skills increased in value, while other skills became worthless, a problem that was also exacerbated by the effects of globalization.

7. Reduced school attendance started appearing in countries where universal education had been ensured before. Although education had a positive effect on income, many young people faced unemployment upon completing full-time education and parents began to doubt the value of leaving their children in school, especially as the costs of schooling increased. New phenomena such as child labour and migration by one or both parents have also been associated with reduced school attendance.

8. Pre-school enrolment, which is also important as it provides a platform for learning later in life, remains low in some BSEC Member states. By upper-secondary school, enrolment rates of poorer children are much lower than those of children from richer families, and the disadvantaged are more strongly represented in vocational schools; this also has a spatial dimension as upper-secondary enrolment rates are higher in the cities than in small towns or rural areas.

9. In spite of these problems, the Black Sea region has always ranked highly in terms of human capital and potential. The UNDP Human Development Index, which takes into account indicators of education and health, including life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, and combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools, as well as GDP per capita (among other indicators) ranks all of the BSEC countries within the high or medium human development scale. Furthermore, the fast economic growth of the region since 2000 has created the conditions for higher expenditures on education.

10. At the same time, a great educational development since the mid-1990s has been the expansion of higher education in the BSEC region. Many BSEC Member States had higher education enrolment rates (as a percentage of the population in the corresponding age group) below 30% in the early 1990s, but by 2004, enrolment rates exceeded 40% in Russia and Ukraine, and 30% in Bulgaria, Georgia and Turkey. However, higher education enrolment rates in some countries remained low in 2004: Albania 19% and Azerbaijan 13%. Private provision of higher education has become important in some countries; the private share is over 25% in Armenia, Georgia and Romania, and over 15% in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Moldova and Russia (OECD, 2008).

Current challenges

11. The demographic trends, with the proportion of the population under 18 declining in BSEC countries since the 1990s (OECD, 2008), pose a threat for the quantity and

quality of the workforce, pension systems, the business environment and the sustainability of social security programmes.

12. What is more, the financial crisis that broke out in late September 2008 and almost led to the collapse of financial markets worldwide, had a strong impact on the Black Sea region resulting in a sharp halt to growth. Reforms in the areas of competitiveness and productivity are key to tackling these challenges. Consequently, reforms in education and training are to be given high priority.

13. Integrating the lifelong learning approach in the educational systems of the BSEC Member States could provide a comprehensive response to current challenges by boosting the region's human capital. Knowledge, skills and competences are essential assets for individuals to succeed in the labour market, since they generally result in lower unemployment rates, better employment and access to geographical mobility. Lifelong learning is considered as the key not only to competitiveness and innovative capacity, but also to personal and community development and social cohesion.

III. COOPERATION WITHIN THE BSEC FRAMEWORK

An Education Action Plan

14. The BSEC Working Group on Education was created in 2005. The current framework of cooperation within BSEC in the sphere of education is set by the relevant Action Plan for 2011-2012. The Action Plan sets as main direction of cooperation the need to develop a more determined and coherent response to the new challenges created by the global impact of the financial crisis, taking into account that education is one of the key components when facing these challenges. The primary objective of the Action Plan is to define the fields of action on education and particularly on higher education and encourage Member States to concentrate on specific domains deemed crucial to minimize the effects of the current global situation.

15. The Education Action Plan sets among the priority activities the following:

- Attach special importance to enhancing the collection and dissemination of information in the field of higher education through the Educational Portal of BSEC and for this purpose nominate the relevant Contact Person from each country;
- Strengthen the cooperation to enhance the performance of education systems by means of sharing experience of quality assurance and development of qualifications framework in higher education and for this purpose organise a meeting of experts;
- Support university research projects and/or joint post-graduate programs among universities and institutions of higher education in the BSEC region of mutual interest which will strengthen the research performance;
- Encourage institutes of higher education to promote the mobility of academic

staff and students within the BSEC Member States through multilateral agreements and/or scholarships;

- Investigate the possibility of cooperation with international organizations as a permanent task.

Political commitment

16. The Athens Declaration of the Ministers Responsible for Education of the BSEC Member States on Cooperation in Higher Education and University Research (Athens, 29 September 2005) placed particular emphasis on the issue of lifelong learning. The Ministers have hence agreed upon to support lifelong learning through the development of training programs elaborated in Universities and Higher Education Institutions. They have also stated that it is necessary to develop also cooperation in the field of general secondary education, vocational education and training and post-university education in the region.

17. The support to lifelong learning was reiterated in the Statement of the Participants of the Meeting of the Undersecretaries and the Heads of Delegations of the Ministries of Education of the BSEC Member States (Istanbul, 27-28 August 2007). The participants agreed to stimulate lifelong learning from early childhood to adulthood through reviewing existing systems in BSEC Member States, exchanging training programs elaborated by the Boards of Education and also experiences and expertise in the field of education, in order to strengthen linkages between learning, training and labor market and thus to update every individual's knowledge and skills. They also agreed to consider the necessity of constant modernizing of technical and vocational education and training to keep up with the rapid changes brought about by globalization and technology and strengthen the cooperation in this field among BSEC Member States.

BSEC Portal on Education

18. In the framework of the BSEC Working Group on Education and with the scientific support by the Technical University of Crete, a Portal for Higher Education is currently being developed. Its main purpose is to enhance the collection and dissemination of information in the field of higher education and specifically in regard to the legislative, regulatory and standard framework in the field of education, with particular emphasis on university research.

19. The Portal provides information on the educational structure of the BSEC Member States (according to the International Standard Classification of Education), a list of all Higher Education Institutes, as well as information about institutes and related fields of study. It supports all languages of BSEC's countries, provides the ability to find information according to country, field of study and more advanced queries and has a forum for discussion between members. A list of scholarships provided by each Member State, research programs and calls/information for new ones as well as job opportunities in BSEC Member States are among the envisaged features of the Portal to be developed during the next phases of this project.

Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN)

20. The Black Sea Universities Network was established in 1998, following the relevant Recommendation (56/2001) of the PABSEC. Today it counts over 100 universities from the 12 BSEC Member States. The current priority areas of cooperation and activity of BSUN are:

- Sustainable Development
- Networking on Innovation and Knowledge Transfer
- Energy Security & Renewable Energy Sources
- Advanced & Multifunctional Materials
- IT&C - Networking & High Performance Computing
- E-health & Telemedicine
- Social & Cultural Cohesion in the Black Sea Region

IV. ATTAINING LIFELONG LEARNING

A. Global Efforts for Lifelong Learning

UNESCO - The Belém Framework for Action in Adult Education and Learning (2010-2022)

21. The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) closed with the adoption of the Belém Framework for Action. Held in December 2009 in Belém, Brazil, with the participation of UNESCO Member States, United Nations agencies, multi- and bi-lateral cooperation agencies, organisations from civil society, the private sector and learners from all world regions, CONFINTEA VI continued a series of global UNESCO meetings on adult education and learning which have been held every twelve years since 1949.

22. The previous conference, CONFINTEA V (Hamburg, 1997), had marked a turning point in the global recognition of and commitment to adult learning and non-formal education. It called attention to adult learning and non-formal education as indispensable elements of lifelong learning. Two landmark documents adopted at the end of the Conference (the *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning* and the *Agenda for the Future*), emphasized that adult and lifelong learning were key tools in addressing the global challenges of the 21st century in relation to democracy, peace and human rights, respect for diversity and conflict resolution, economic and ecological sustainability and workforce development.

23. Building on these documents, the *Belém Framework for Action* records the commitments of Member States and presents a strategic guide for the global development of adult literacy and adult education within the perspective of lifelong learning.

B. Regional framework

Bologna Process - European Higher Education Area

24. All BSEC Member States are partners of the Bologna Process (PABSEC Recommendation 97/2007)) and thus of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Lifelong learning has been recognized as an essential element of the EHEA since the Ministerial Conference in Prague in 2001. With the *Prague Communiqué* there has taken place an expansion of the objectives of Bologna Process in terms of lifelong learning, involving students as active partners and enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. Also, the participating ministers committed themselves to ensure the further development of quality assurance and development of national qualification frameworks. This objective was correlated with the lifelong learning one, as it is considered an important element of higher education that must be taken into consideration when building up new systems.

25. Since then, there has been growing awareness of the need to embed lifelong learning within higher education, in order to meet the challenges of the future. This includes the particular challenges arising from the changing demography of Europe. Increasingly, lifelong learning is seen as a cross cutting issue, inherent in all aspects of the Bologna Process. Ministers' goals for lifelong learning will be substantially realized by:

- improving the recognition of prior learning, including non formal and informal learning;
- creating more flexible, student-centered modes of delivery;
- widening access to higher education.

European Union

26. For the BSEC Member States which are EU members (Bulgaria, Greece and Romania), candidate country (Turkey) and potential candidate countries (Albania and Serbia), the European Union provides a clear framework:

Europe 2020 Strategy (2010-2020) for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

27. Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. It is the successor of the Lisbon Strategy, aiming to turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities aim to help the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

28. Concretely, the Union has set five objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020. Three Flagship initiatives are related to adult learning agendas. These include:

- A new skills for new jobs agenda
- Youth on the move
- European platform against poverty.

Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ("ET 2020")

29. **ET 2020** is a follow-up to the earlier Education and Training 2010 work programme.

It recognises that high-quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and vocational education and training are fundamental to Europe's success. However, in a rapidly changing world, lifelong learning needs to be a priority, as the key to employment, economic success and allowing people to participate fully in society.

30. The long-term strategic objectives of EU education and training policies are:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

European Commission - Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)

31. The European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme supports transnational education and training activities in Europe. It aims to enable people at all stages of their lives to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as helping to develop the education and training sector across Europe.

32. The programme funds a range of actions including exchanges, study visits and networking activities. Projects are intended not only for individual students and learners, but also for teachers, trainers and all others involved in education and training.

33. There are four sub-programmes which fund projects at different levels of education and training:

- *Comenius* for schools
- *Erasmus* for higher education
- *Leonardo da Vinci* for vocational education and training
- *Grundtvig* for adult education

34. For the countries surrounding the EU, mechanisms such as **Instruments for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)** and the **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)** are transmission routes for lifelong learning policies and practices being promoted by the EU. Regarding BSEC Member States, the former Instrument covers Albania, Serbia and Turkey and the latter ENP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) plus Russia.

35. **TEMPUS** is the European Union's programme which supports the modernisation of higher education in the EU's surrounding area. Tempus contributes to preparing the candidate and potential candidate countries for a participation in the integrated Life

Long Learning Programme (LLP) and is funded by the two financial instruments mentioned above.

36. Its priorities focus on promoting institutional cooperation that involves the European Union and Partner Countries, through the reform and modernisation of higher education systems in the Partner Countries. It also aims to promote voluntary convergence of the higher education systems in the Partner Countries with EU developments in the field of higher education.

37. In addition to promoting cooperation between institutions, Tempus also promotes a people-to-people approach by providing support to consortia of institutions composed mainly of universities or university associations, but also by non-academic partners.

38. Of relevance to the Black Sea region, covering regions of 8 BSEC Member States (Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine), the **Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2007-2013** (Black Sea JOP) is a programme under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). It aims to contribute, through technical assistance, to “a stronger and sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin”.

39. “Priority 3” of the Black Sea JOP is supporting cultural and educational networks for the establishment of a common cultural environment in the Basin. Accordingly, “Measure 3.1” consists in promoting cultural networking and educational exchange in the Black Sea Basin communities.

European Training Foundation (ETF)

40. Within the EU’s enlargement policies, ETF, an EU agency, supports countries in harnessing the potential of human capital through the reform of vocational education, training and employment systems. Among the BSEC Member States, ETF partners are: Albania, Serbia and Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine (ENP countries), as well as Russia.

41. ETF works as an international centre of expertise, working with relevant stakeholder groups such as: policy makers, practitioners and donors in the EU, its Member States and partner countries; European and international institutions (EU Member State bilateral donor organisations, the World Bank, OECD and the UN system organisations).

42. Projects developed in ETF partner countries cover the following areas: Lifelong learning; Employability and competitiveness; Teacher training; Quality assurance; Equal access for women and minority groups; Qualification frameworks; Entrepreneurial learning; Skills for poverty reduction; Technology in learning; Governance and transparency; Skills profiles of migrants.

43. A lifelong learning approach is also reflected in the priorities of cooperation between **EU and Russia**, whose ties in the area of education have seen a steady expansion over the recent years. The **Roadmap for the Fourth Common Space on**

Research, Education and Culture, agreed at the EU-Russia Summit in Moscow in May, 2005, lays out three main areas for cooperation:

- Encouraging closer co-operation in the area of non-formal education;
- Promoting the development of life skills education.
- Making the European Higher Education Area a reality, in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process.

NGO level

European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN)

44. Networking in the field of higher education plays an important role in promoting lifelong learning. EUCEN is the largest European multidisciplinary association in university lifelong learning. Founded in 1991, it is an international non-governmental organisation with 212 members from 40 different countries. More than 20 institutions from 8 BSEC Member States (Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) are EUCEN members. EUCEN is receiving support from the European Commission in the form of operating grants and its objectives are:

- to contribute to the economic and cultural life of Europe through the promotion and advancement of lifelong learning within higher education institutions in Europe and elsewhere;
- to foster universities' influence in the development of lifelong learning knowledge and policies throughout Europe.

V. BSEC'S EFFORTS TO ATTAIN LIFELONG LEARNING

45. BSEC Member States' efforts to attain lifelong learning follow generally the principles and standard setting reflected on the global and regional policy frameworks presented above.

46. Although the current international debate over lifelong learning has only been underway for the last two decades, BSEC Member States governments have not had to create policies from scratch. Most of them have sought to modernize and systematize existing patterns of provision of adult learning, and review existing institutional structures, with a view to raising levels of participation and attainment, focusing mostly on vocational education and training for growth and competitiveness.

47. Promoting learning across the lifespan as a conceptual framework and an organising principle of all forms of education, has been gaining attention only recently. Some BSEC Member States have adopted overarching lifelong learning strategy statements of some type, covering different education and training sectors. These statements set out national policy priorities and have put in place action plans and specific programmes to achieve greater efficiency and to improve quality. Others are still preparing strategy statements pursuing lifelong learning policies without an encompassing, overarching lifelong learning strategy.

48. **Bulgaria, Georgia and Greece** have developed lifelong strategies, while in **Romania** such strategy is under preparation:

49. **Bulgaria** has elaborated several policy documents and strategies for the period 2007-2013, which include the Continuing Vocational Training Strategy (2005-2010), the Employment Strategy (2008-2015), and the Operational Programme “Human resources development” (2007-2013). All of these have contributed to the elaboration of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2008-2013) adopted in October 2008. LLL in Bulgaria refers to the formal, non-formal and informal learning options provided at universities, qualification centers and educational organizations.

50. National Lifelong Learning Strategy in **Georgia** has been designed by the Adult Education Association of Georgia on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Ministry of Education and Science on January 28, 2009. Design and approval of the lifelong learning strategy is part of the action plan outlined in the preparatory phase of Fast Track Initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and is regarded as one of the main priorities of European Neighbourhood Policy action plan. The main focus of the present National Lifelong Strategy of Georgia is limited to one of the most important forms of lifelong learning – adult non-formal education. Concerning vocational education and training, in September 2010 parliament adopted substantial amendments to the law on vocational education ensuring a clear link between vocational and higher education, increasing flexibility and aligning provision with lifelong learning principles.

51. In **Greece**, the national Lifelong Learning Strategy falls within the European strategy EUROPE 2020 for an intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. Lifelong learning is seen in a comprehensive approach, as a public good for all the citizens and especially those who need it most. The Secretariat-General for Lifelong Learning, under the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, is the responsible body in charge of planning, coordinating lifelong learning policies and monitoring the implementation of programmes and activities, which address the needs of the Greek adult population in the current socio-economic and political context.

52. As part of an effort focusing on citizen’s needs aiming at decreasing social inequalities by overcoming educational deadlocks, a new law on lifelong learning has been in force since September 2010. It is titled "Development of Lifelong Learning and other provisions" and its goal is the development of lifelong learning via alternative educational paths as well as the association of lifelong learning bodies with those of quality assurance so as to successfully connect lifelong learning with occupation and to provide these type of education beyond the formal educational system.

53. **Romania** is yet to finish the development of a national integrated strategy for lifelong learning. It is expected that this work will complete soon. Nevertheless, the decision-makers’ and experts’ interest in the development of a coherent national lifelong learning strategy has increased considerably. European policy lines on lifelong learning are implemented through the Education and Training program 2011, programs on economic and social cohesion, and Research Program Framework. Strategic reference documents are the following: National Development Plan 2007-2013, as a document of strategic multi-annual planning and financial programming;

National Strategic Framework of Reference 2007-2013, as a reference document for programming structural and cohesion funds. Romania is also developing a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The recognition and validation of vocational competencies is performed by the assessment centres authorised by the National Adult Training Board.

54. In other BSEC Member States, the lifelong learning concept is introduced in national education strategies and plans and/or defined by legislation.

55. In **Albania**, reference to lifelong learning is made in National Education Strategy for 2004-2015. It is considered as a part of efforts of an individual to integrate into contemporary life in a continuous manner. Reported difficulties in embracing all stages of education within the lifelong learning process require social dialogue among the education stakeholders like employers, local and regional authorities, Civil Society Organizations, other organizations, various communities and citizens itself.

56. In **Armenia**, the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education enacted in 2004 regulates higher and postgraduate education and defines the concept of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is among the basic principles of the Strategy for Primary Vocational (Artisan) and Secondary Vocational Education adopted in 2004. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, who are responsible bodies for the organization of the activities in the sphere of education in Armenia, aim in their activities to incorporate lifelong learning as an integral part of vocational education. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Science adopted state standards for vocational education programmes, while further expanding the modular learning approach. In addition, it established its own Lifelong Learning Department in October 2010.

57. Article 24 of the Education Law of **Azerbaijan** refers to “additional education”. It is defined as part of continuous education and vocational training, ensuring possibility of further education to every citizen holding official document on completion of any level of vocational training. Organizational rules of additional education are defined by a relevant authority, in the framework of special education programs. Vocational training and adult education are provided by relevant structures which issue certificates to the participants upon completion of their training. Adult education is also supported by Decree N163 of 2010 of the Cabinet of Ministers, which stresses the role of adult education in enhancing active and competent participation of adult citizens in society's changing social, political and cultural life. Adult education may be carried out in state, municipal and private institutions, and is addressed to persons wishing to upgrade their skills or change their field of work, to unemployed or those who return to work after a long break, to housewives and mothers, to former militaries etc.

58. The Draft Education Code of **Moldova** includes important provisions on decentralization to the regions, lifelong learning, quality assurance and the involvement of social partners in education. A clear role for social partners in training provision, learning opportunities for adults and young people outside formal education, and effective financing are among the future priorities for Moldova.

59. In **Russia**, the lifelong learning concept has been incorporated in the “National Educational Doctrine of the Russian Federation”, the government programmes and the “Russia’s Education Policy” report as part of enhancement for the development of education system. New education establishments and respective programmes have been created in order to meet educational needs of different groups of population. For example, evening schools, previously designed only for adults, today comprise young population. There are also new type open schools in some cities, aimed to provide second chance to education to those who have lost this right for different reasons. Providing education to employees is a field where efforts are intensified, taking into consideration that adults are not yet ready psychologically for taking responsibility for their own education and that more information is needed among adult population regarding the existing courses. Public institutions and new private enterprises take leadership in this sphere. The ratio of people educated by public initiatives is 26%; private initiatives – 24% and privatised enterprises – 15%. Corporate education programmes financed by employers educate about 4 million people annually.

60. In **Serbia**, the Law on Fundamentals of the Education System (LoF, 2009) sets a framework for an education policy across the pre-school to secondary education sectors by stipulating new principles and strategic approaches. The key innovations in the law include: New principles of equity, improved access, individualised approach to learners, lifelong learning, and of better planning, quality and efficiency of education; Educational goals of investing in human capital, developing key skills, matching competences to the requirements of jobs, economy, science and technology; Establishing the Council for VET and Adult Education; Increased autonomy of schools and more flexible learning programmes.

61. Recently, the National Education Council prepared an initial concept of an overall education reform for developing and improving quality of education, and submitted it for discussion to the education committee of the Parliament of Serbia. The document was based on a lifelong learning perspective and aimed at an integral approach to education reform, emphasising key competences and the role of teachers. As a result of this process, a new Law amending the above mentioned Law of 2009 was adopted in July 2011.

62. In **Turkey**, education and training activities are designed and implemented mainly on the basis of the Constitution, Educational Acts and Ministry of National Education decrees. Strategic objectives and policies concerning lifelong learning fall within the *Strategic Plan of the Ministry of National Education 2010-2011*. They focus mainly on: increasing participation in adult learning and income support programmes through opening up new modules and branches in order to enhance entrepreneurship and work force development; increasing the number of participants in foreign language courses opened at public education centres as well as elaborating necessary regulations in order to meet language proficiency demand at all levels; raising awareness on the importance of lifelong learning through increasing extracurricular activities, including organization of events aiming at development of entrepreneurship spirit; revising qualifications and job definitions of the professional teachers working in the private formal and informal education establishments; developing distance education opportunities to adults who either have not completed school education or wish to further develop their knowledge or obtain a new profession, through simplified communication systems of e-learning.

63. In the field of vocational education and training, relevant legislation and regulations have established new standards from 2001 for the creation of practical training opportunities. More precisely, for small enterprises with less than 20 employees providing skills training to vocational students is optional. Larger enterprises with 20 or more employees that operate in fields covered under Law No. 4702 have to provide practical training in the ratio of 5%-10% on the basis of the total number of the employees. Enterprises employing more than 200 people must establish a unit for practical training, and appoint training personnel to the unit for this purpose. The law covers 130 occupational branches, and the certification of these occupations is the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. Certification for other vocations (that are not covered by the law) is the responsibility of the concerned vocational institutions. The Labour Code, which entered into force in 2003, provides for the involvement of social partners in the preparation of new legislation in the employment and social affairs field, through the establishment of a permanent tripartite structure with a key role in this process.

64. BSEC Member States are increasingly aware of the importance of continuous education and training and have been developing, to a greater or lesser extent, strategies and plans on the basis of the lifelong learning concept. Nevertheless, there is often a gap between rhetoric and reality, since in many cases the concept has yet to be clarified in order to move on with policy designing. Strategies for implementation of lifelong learning policies are in place in some member states. Attention should be paid to overambitious goals which often hamper the practical implementation of measures laid out in strategic plans.

65. Key areas in the BSEC Member States' efforts to promote lifelong learning strategies and policy reforms which require further development include: cooperation and coordination in policy development and implementation among a wide range of institutions and stakeholders including social partners; institutional reforms to support existing legislation; promotion of a culture of learning since the early years of education, in order to set the foundation for further learning in adult life; facilitation of access and participation for all, through providing vulnerable groups with learning opportunities across their life-cycle and in the different settings where learning can occur; allocation of resources and development of public-private partnerships for funding.

VI. Conclusions

66. Lifelong learning involves a wide spectrum of learning objectives and groups of learners to be served by formal, non-formal and continuing education programmes and through an enriched informal learning environment. It therefore involves a variety of actors and stakeholders, including a wide range of non-governmental organizations as well as individual citizens.

67. Peoples of the Black Sea Region dispose of a dynamic human capital and a good and promising potential in the sphere of education. Promoting the development of lifelong learning in the region requires coherent strategies which should place as their main objective the establishment of the conditions favourable to fostering education

for all, while promoting education for both social development and economic growth. Lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies, to improve social cohesion and equal opportunities as well as to promote sustainable development, harmony and stability.

68. Although the existing frameworks of lifelong learning development vary across the BSEC region, there are common challenges and opportunities regarding its development. Common culture and history, as well as geographical proximity provides an ideal basis for developing synergies in the field of education. Regional cooperation within BSEC and its Related Bodies through exchange of information and experience is of paramount importance in order to identify policy priorities and common strategies relevant to the region and its peoples. Promoting multilingualism, information and communication technologies and mobility, while raising awareness on the benefits of continuous learning and personal improvement could attract and motivate more and more people to engage in lifelong learning processes.