

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION  
PABSEC**

THE CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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REPORT

on

**Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries  
for the Improvement of Education**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Third Meeting of the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee which was held in Chisinau on 28-29 September, 1994 decided, upon the proposal of the Romanian delegation supported by other delegations, to put on the agenda of its Fourth Meeting in Bucharest on 6-7 April, 1995 as the main item "Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries for the Improvement of Education". The main draft of the Report was prepared by the Romanian delegation, while the International Secretariat also received information and proposals from the delegations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Ukraine which were used in preparing the final drafts of the Report and the Recommendation on this subject.

## **2. The Present Stage of Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries in the Field of Education**

### **A. Reforming Educational Systems in the Member Countries**

Most PABSEC member countries are now going through a period of transition from dictatorship to democracy. In the long-term perspective this transition engages the whole of society and comprises concerted reforms in all fields. Above all, this passage from dictatorship to democracy presupposes a fundamental change in mentality, that is to say, the modification of the educational model. The system of education still in effect in these countries was created according to the principles and needs of the communist society which aimed to create an individual conceived only at the mass level as a unit of workforce, and hence a simple material goods producer subordinated to the master state.

The new educational system based on freedom, emancipation, as well as the permanent creation and equality of opportunities, has to shape an individual conscious of the values of democracy, a producer and consumer of culture. This profound change would only be materialised gradually, by restructuring the entire organisational framework of education: purposes, legislative basis, institutions, procedures and curriculums, selection system, financing, administration, evaluation, training and upgrading of the teaching staff, etc.

Both from the long-term and medium-term points of view, the reforms - whether economic or social - currently envisaged in most PABSEC member countries will not be possible in the absence of adequate human resources. And education is precisely the specialised institution called upon to provide these human resources at the level of quality demanded by the future society. That is why the educational reform is not only a tool used to restructure the educational system, but also an essential lever of all socio-economic transformation. The political objective of European integration set by all the PABSEC's ex-communist member countries requires the restructuring of the institutions and sectors in the social field, an impossible thing without the structural reform of the system of education and upbringing. Within the shortest possible period of time (less than ten years)

all these countries will have to achieve the performance criteria of the Western education and establish an organisational mode of education compatible with the norms of the developed countries. By way of consequence, the educational systems of these member countries must be prepared in due time to face the situations of mobility, openness, competition and specialisation required by the integrated European economic market.

This means a totally new situation, fundamentally different from the conditions of economic and social protectionism and cultural autarchy specific to the old communist regimes. The confrontation of the graduates of the communist educational system with the tough conditions of the world labour market will produce a particularly powerful shock having major economic and social implications.

All the PABSEC member countries have common or very close interests in the field of education. Actually, only Turkey has not had a communist experience, however, in the not too distant past, she went through the experience of the transition to democracy. In the ex-communist countries one could see the development, to a certain degree and within the prescribed ideological limits, of well-performing education, albeit in certain specialised fields. In Turkey, important efforts are made to develop its education bringing it in alignment with the Western standards. The similar difficulties and very close levels of the development of educational systems in the PABSEC member countries make possible and necessary their fruitful cooperation in this truly important field of the future.

## **B. Bilateral Cooperation**

At present the cooperation among the PABSEC member countries in the field of education on bilateral basis is carried out in accordance with agreements signed between the governments, cooperation agreements signed between the ministries of education, and cooperation protocols and exchange programmes signed on the basis of previously concluded agreements. These agreements, protocols and programmes form a short-term and long-term legal framework of the bilateral cooperation between the member countries in the field of education.

For example, Turkey has signed Cultural Agreements with Albania and Romania followed by bilateral cultural exchange programmes; the Agreement on Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Sports Cooperation with Georgia, the Agreement on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation with the Russian Federation. The Turkish Ministry of National Education has signed cooperation agreements with the respective ministries or agencies of Azerbaijan, Romania and the Russian Federation. There are educational cooperation protocols with Albania, Azerbaijan, Romania, and the Republics of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Saha (Yakutia) of the Russian Federation. The Framework Agreement and the Protocol on Educational and Scientific Cooperation with Azerbaijan, the Agreement on Scientific, Technological and Educational Cooperation with Moldova and the Agreement on Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Sports Cooperation with Ukraine have been prepared and are to be signed in the near future.

Ukraine has signed Agreements on Cooperation in the Field of Education, Science and Culture with Romania and Moldova; the Agreement in the Field of Science and Education has been signed between the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and the Ministry of Science and Education of Moldova; annual cooperation protocols between the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and respective ministries of Moldova and Romania have also been signed. Similar draft agreements between the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and respective ministries of Albania, Georgia, Romania and the Russian Federation have been prepared and are now under consideration.

The Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan has signed cooperation agreements with the respective ministries of Turkey (as mentioned above), the Russian Federation and Moldova. A bilateral Azeri-Turkish executive commission has been formed to facilitate and supervise the implementation of the education cooperation agreement; the commission should meet twice a year alternately in Baku and Ankara to review the progress and conditions of the implementation of the agreement and to fix common perspectives.

All the above mentioned agreements, protocols and programmes mostly apply to higher education. The table provided by the Turkish Ministry of National Education gives the number of students from other PABSEC member countries in Turkish universities and the number of Turkish university-level students studying in other PABSEC member countries:

| Country            | Turkish students in other PABSEC member countries | Students from other PABSEC member countries in Turkey |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Albania            | 6   | 20  |
| Armenia            | -   | -   |
| Azerbaijan         | 839   | 1901  |
| Georgia            | 199   | 10  |
| Moldova            | 31  | 175   |
| Romania            | 41  | 73  |
| Russian Federation | 654   | 862   |
| Ukraine            | 74  | 79  |

This table gives an idea of the level of student exchange in the region; in many cases the quantity of students from a single country is represented by a two-digit number. There is certainly room for enhancing student exchange programmes. The mobility of students, lecturers and researchers constitutes a significant indicator of the development of educational cooperation.

Important factors serving to increase the mobility of students, lecturers and researchers are the mutual recognition of qualifications (academic diplomas, scientific degrees and other education-related documents) and the reduction of the legal, administrative and financial obstacles facing those who wish to study or work in another member country.

During the Third Meeting of the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee in Chisinau, the representatives of the national delegations of Moldova and Ukraine, backed by other delegations, voiced their support for measures to promote the mutual recognition of academic diplomas. In its written proposals forwarded to the International Secretariat, the Armenian national delegation has suggested to discuss a proposal which the Assembly can make at its next Plenary Session to the Heads of State of the PABSEC Member Countries concerning the signing of agreements on the recognition of academic courses, diplomas and other education-related documents.

Another field of bilateral cooperation currently underway is the exchange of textbooks. For example, in 1994 Azerbaijan has provided schoolbooks worth 2.4 million manats to the Azeri minority in the Marneuli area in Georgia; it is planning to provide a total number of schoolbooks worth 19 million manats. At the same time 15 different schoolbooks are published in Turkey for secondary schools in Azerbaijan.

### **C. Multilateral Cooperation**

The essential legal framework for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation of the Black Sea nations in the field of education is provided by the the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information which was signed by the Ministers of Culture of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine on 6 March, 1993 in Istanbul.

Article 2 of the Convention states, in particular that "the Parties will undertake to encourage, promote and develop:

- (a) cooperation and exchanges among scientific and research organisations, higher education and other educational institutions of the Parties;
- (b) exchanges of experts, lecturers, teachers, professors and students to familiarise with experience and ideas, training, upgrading, delivering lectures, teaching and carrying out scientific work;
- (c) language practice, scientific and research work, as well as post-graduate education;
- (d) cooperation and exchanges to work out and implement new teaching methods and pedagogical materials;
- (e) cooperation among publishing houses, scientific and educational institutions, as well as exchanges of teaching materials, abstract bulletins and other scientific publications to receive more comprehensive information and objective image of the parties;
- (f) cooperation and exchange of information on the opportunities of recognising diplomas, degrees, scientific and academic status among the Parties".

**The Black Sea University** is the best example of regional-level - as well as international-level - educational cooperative project in the Black Sea area. Based on the experience of five European summer schools staged in 1991 and 1992, the European Cultural Centre, Bucharest, affiliated to the European Cultural Centre, Geneva, initiated the setting up of the Black Sea University which began its activities in May 1993. The University is an international centre of permanent education specialising in short-term (approximately two weeks in duration) postgraduate-level courses, seminars and workshops.

The University's main objective is to create a multinational intellectual environment of non-formal education where scholars, governmental and non-governmental experts, representatives of the private sector, and students may come together to facilitate mutual knowledge and understanding among the Black Sea nations and enhance scholars' and students' ability to solve common problems such as preserving the natural environment and cultural heritage of the region while also promoting regional economic development. Special emphasis is placed on the pragmatic side of learning and its application to present and specific needs of Romania as well as other countries of the Black Sea area.

The Assembly has followed with interest the activities of the University which from the very beginning has functioned in the spirit and towards attaining the goals of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. In the Report of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee on the ratification and implementation of the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information and in the Assembly's Recommendation 4/1994 on the Joint Research Programme on the History of the Black Sea Basin, it was stressed that the Black Sea University represented an important positive development in the cultural and educational cooperation in the region. The Assembly will continue to keep abreast of the University's progress and will seek ways to provide support and contribute to a more dynamic involvement of the member countries in its activities.

In 1993, the Black Sea University organised 30 summer schools and workshops with about 900 lecturers and students from 25 countries. In 1994, the University hosted 40 summer schools and seminars with about 1100 participants from 37 countries. In 1994, the number of participants from the PABSEC member countries was as follows: Albania - 5, Georgia - 5, Moldova - 39, Russia - 23, Romania - 794, Turkey - 13, Ukraine - 24.

Among the topics of the 1994 schools and seminars were, for example, "Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts", "Transportation of the 21st Century in the Black Sea Area", "Environmental Management", "Business Opportunities in the Black Sea Area", "International Tourism in the Black Sea Area", "Black Sea Cultures", etc. The universities, organisations and individuals in the member countries interested in the participation in further activities of the University can address their enquiries to: Ms. Maria Popescu, Executive Secretary of the Black Sea University Foundation, 50, Boul. Primaverii, Bucharest, Romania; Tel. (401) 618 50 04, Fax (401) 312 83 27.

In November, 1993, the rectors of universities from Turkey and the Commonwealth of Independent States established a **Turkish-CIS university association** designed to

improve cooperation in education and research. The association comprises Turkish universities as well as members of the Europe-Asia Universities' Union, and is run by a general assembly, a presidency and a permanent committee. The presidency is to be carried out jointly by the Turkish Higher Education Council chairman and the head of the Europe-Asia Universities' Union. The permanent committee consists of the Turkish Higher Education Council chairman, the head of the Europe-Asia Universities' Union, the rectors of two Turkish universities, and the rectors of the universities of St.Petersburg, Tbilisi, Tashkent and Turkmen University.

In this context it can be pointed out that the expansion of the scope of this university association to involve Albania and Romania will make this organisation a regional-level entity which will include members from all the PABSEC member countries as well as Central Asian countries. The Assembly can draw the attention of the educational authorities of the member countries to this practical opportunity.

In March 1994, the **Georgian PABSEC Youth Association** was established in Tbilisi under the patronage of the Georgian national PABSEC delegation. One of the goals of the Association is to promote exchanges in higher education in various fields among the PABSEC member countries, it also aims to help build a regional youth forum in the fields of politics, science, education, culture and economics. The Georgian national delegation put forward an idea of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Youth Assembly which could be a model of the PABSEC; it was also proposed that a sub-committee on youth relations be set up within the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee.

The establishment of youth associations similar to the Georgian one under the patronage of the national delegations in each PABSEC member countries could become the first step towards the setting up of the Black Sea Youth Assembly, with one of its major activities in the field of educational cooperation. This proposal, within the overall framework of the proposal of the Georgian national delegation, could be discussed by the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee, as well as by individual national delegations which are to provide support for this initiative at the national level.

Among other activities, it can be mentioned that the PABSEC International Secretariat has provided support to the organisation in Tekirdag, Turkey between 15-21 May, 1995 of the schoolchildren's **Black Sea Folk Dance Festival** hosted by the Tekirdag Private Lycee.

### **3. Prospects and Proposals for Further Educational Cooperation in the Region**

#### **A. Using the International Expertise**

A number of international organisations, such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have amassed a great expertise in the field of education and educational cooperation. The expertise of the Council of Europe is of particular value for the PABSEC member countries since most of

them are or about to become the members of this organisation. Within the Council of Europe, a varied programme of activities promoting cooperation in education is organised through the European Cultural Convention. Other activities stem from the regular meetings of European Ministers of Education.

The Council of Europe pioneered the concept of "permanent education" whereby education is no longer confined to the early years of a person's life, but should cover the whole life span, giving all individuals greater opportunity to develop their creative potential to the full while at the same time benefiting society by allowing them to adapt to rapid social and technological changes.

The Council of Europe has extensively dealt with educational matters starting with primary level to secondary school to higher education. At secondary school level emphasis has been laid, in particular, on teaching about the functioning of democracy and about human rights. The way in which history and geography are taught plays an important role in the formation of young people's attitudes to other countries, peoples and cultures. The Council's school programme has paid particular attention to the removal of bias, error and stereotypes from school syllabuses and textbooks and to ways of giving a European dimension to the whole of the primary and secondary school curriculum. In order to interest schoolchildren in European affairs the Council of Europe together with the European Union supports the annual European Schools Day painting and essay competitions.

The Council's Standing Conference on University Problems (representing ministries and academic authorities) deals with such current priorities as access to higher education, postgraduate training and the reform of legislation on higher education in central and eastern Europe. To facilitate the free movement of people and ideas in higher education, the Council of Europe operates a series of conventions on the equivalence of academic diplomas. It also runs a network of national information centres on academic mobility and equivalence and a higher education fellowship scheme for postgraduate students and research workers.

To improve international understanding, cooperation and mobility, the Council of Europe has helped to develop a new communicative approach to the learning and teaching of modern languages. Its system of setting objectives for basic language learning ("threshold levels") has been widely used as the basis for textbooks and curricula.

Most of the above measures can be successfully applied by the PABSEC member countries in cooperation with the Council of Europe and other international organisations. There are also possibilities of cooperation within the framework of the current projects of technical assistance PHARE (for central and eastern European countries) and TACIS (for the CIS countries) being implemented by the European Union, and the Council of Europe's programmes SOCRATE (for central and eastern European countries) and SOCRATE II (for Russia).

## **B. Regional and Bilateral Measures to be Recommended**

### **to the Member Countries**

Part of the regional and bilateral measures aimed at the improvement of educational systems in the PABSEC member countries through their cooperation has been already described above. The national delegations have also proposed to take the following steps:

- support to the process of educational reform in the PABSEC member countries;
- intensification of contacts between ministries and encouragement of the conclusion of bilateral educational cooperation agreements;
- accession to the universally recognised international conventions;
- exchange of scientific and technical information on educational issues;
- coordinated programme of action for the cooperation among the educational systems and educational establishments;
- study of the experience of different countries of the world;
- establishment of the network of cooperation in the field of education for the PABSEC member countries;
- establishment of the PABSEC consultation and documentation centre in the field of education;
- adoption of laws in the field of education, close ties and experience sharing in the field of legislation at the level of the specialised parliamentary commissions and committees;
- introduction of common criteria of education;
- improvement of curricula and their implementation;
- training skilled teachers and lecturers meeting international criteria;
- exchange of the experience of teachers, lecturers and researchers from different countries and organising their cooperation, training courses and international scientific meetings;
- exchanges of pupils, undergraduate and postgraduate students, teachers and lecturers; introducing scholarship schemes for this purpose;
- organising competitions in different subjects for the pupils of the countries of the region;
- organising students' and pupils' arts festivals, sports events, vacation camps, etc;
- use of internationally recognised textbooks and exchange of literature;
- improvement of foreign language learning and provision of textbooks for this purpose;
- establishment of sections and faculties in universities in order to train specialists in the languages and cultures of the PABSEC member countries;
- establishment under the auspices of the PABSEC and the supervision of the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee of the Black Sea University as an international institution of higher learning at the graduate and postgraduate level;
- preparation and publication of information on the development of education, progress in the implementation of the conventions already accepted by the member countries, and on the activities performed;
- discussion of issues concerning the provision of financial and other means for educational cooperation;
- removal of hostility-provoking passages and manipulative expressions from textbooks and atlases;
- contacts between schools and universities, including development of twin-school projects between primary, secondary and higher education institutions;
- inter-university specialisation, research and cooperation;
- cooperation with other international and inter-parliamentary organisations;

- organising in the near future a joint special meeting of the Assembly's Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee and the Legal and Political Committee devoted to legislation in the domain of education and youth

The Armenian national delegation also suggested that the Assembly present proposals to the Heads of State of the PABSEC Member Countries on the conclusion of the following inter-state agreements:

- On the Cooperation of the PABSEC Member Countries in the Field of Education;
- On the Recognition of Academic Courses, Diplomas and Other Education-Related Documents.

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