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## **REPORT\***

### **“Cultural Cooperation in the BSEC region: Experiences, Opportunities and Challenges”**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In an increasingly globalised world in which people are able to travel and exchange information faster than ever before, there is a growing interdependence between peoples, nations and cultures. Cultural cooperation and exchanges play a vital role in promoting constructive, sustainable relationships based on dialogue and trust. This interaction implies communication and respect between the cultures involved and helps to achieve a sounder understanding of respective values and to reduce susceptibility to stereotypes. As a result, it promotes peace and stability, as well as better economic and political relations.
2. As is stressed in the BSEC Charter, the BSEC Member States are determined to “achieve through joint efforts the constant improvement of the well-being of their peoples, ..., acting in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness and enhancing mutual respect and confidence, dialogue and cooperation among the Member States”.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC, acknowledging the important role of cultural cooperation in reaching the objectives of BSEC, has adopted numerous Reports and Recommendations on cultural issues, such as:
  - Ratification and implementation of the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information (*rec. 3/1994*);
  - Joint Research Programme on the History of the Black Sea Basin (*rec. 4/1994*);
  - Protection of the cultural heritage of the PABSEC Member Countries (*rec. 6/1994*);
  - Guidelines of the Program of the Protection of the Cultural Heritage in the Black Sea Region (*rec. 18/1996*);
  - Youth cooperation in the Black Sea region (*rec.24/1997*);
  - The role of mass media in promoting cooperation in the Black Sea region (*rec. 47/2000*);
  - The role of culture in the development of the BSEC region (*rec. 70/2003*);
  - Preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage of the BSEC Member States (*rec. 80/2004*);
  - Cooperation in the sphere of cultural tourism in the Black Sea region (*rec.83/2005*);
  - Cultural, educational and social aspects of the EU enlargement: consequences for the Black Sea region (*rec.86/2005*);
  - The dialogue among cultures as a mean to build trust among the nations (*rec.89/2006*);
  - The process of globalisation and the potential threat to the cultural diversity (*rec.93/2006*).
4. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2010 as International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. During the same period, Istanbul, the host city of the BSEC Organization is the European Capital of Culture. In this context, the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee decided to take up the subject of “Cultural cooperation in the BSEC region: experiences, opportunities and challenges” as the main agenda item of its 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Contributions to the Report were received from the national delegations of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Romania and Turkey. Reference material was also obtained from the official websites of UNESCO, EU, the Council of Europe and other official institutions.

## II. CULTURAL COOPERATION IN THE BSEC REGION

### A. Context and key elements shaping national priorities

5. The Member States' approach to international cultural co-operation is shaped by their history and heritage, their geopolitical position and regional relationships, as well as traditional policy commitments and major events affecting their recent and current priorities. The following key elements need to be taken into account:

- The Member States' historical and archaeological heritage, and their interest in its preservation and valorisation;
- The long-standing co-existence of the peoples of the region in the course of history (among others during the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union) and in this context:
  - the development on one hand of relations with other ethnic, cultural and religious groups and the creation of severe tensions and conflicts on the other;
  - the traditional cultural bonds of Member States sharing the same religious tradition, (Russia and the countries of South-Eastern Europe) and linguistic (Turkey with Azerbaijan, Moldova with Romania);
- Developments, from the early 1990s to the present, fuelling the already existing trends of migration, cultural insecurity, and re-examination of questions of identity and culture;
- The orientation of most of BSEC Member States towards integration in European structures.

### B. Bilateral cooperation

6. Cultural cooperation in the BSEC region is conducted mainly at bilateral level. Bilateral activities are carried out within the framework of signed intergovernmental and interagency agreements on cultural cooperation, memoranda and exchange programmes, which provide the legal and, in some cases, budgetary framework for cultural cooperation actions. Bilateral cooperation programs mainly include activities in the fields of visual arts, theater, dance, traditional arts, literature, inter-university cooperation, archaeology and cultural heritage in general. A well established tradition in the region are the Cultural Years, devoted to a particular country, which are usually of reciprocal character: Georgia's Year in Ukraine (2005), Year of Russia in Bulgaria (2008) followed by the Year of Bulgaria in Russia (2009) etc. In the same spirit, there are also Days and Months of culture such as the Days of Serbia in Ukraine (2009), the Days of Azerbaijan in Ukraine (2009), or the Tbilisi Days in Istanbul (2006).

7. The main actors in developing government policy measures to support cultural cooperation in the BSEC Member States are the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Ministries of Culture. Policy negotiation is most often conducted by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, while implementation and the management and promotion of the resulting actions can be the responsibility of either ministry. In some cases, decisions and tasks are shared between the two ministries and/or with appropriate executive bodies (e.g. arts council, national cultural institute).

8. There are also independent programs and projects involving cultural cooperation across the BSEC region initiated and managed by foundations, NGOs, cultural networks, universities, cultural organizations and artists. Such initiatives fill the gap in cases where two countries have no official intergovernmental agreements. They may reflect government cultural policy and cultural diplomacy agendas or they can be entirely independent projects.

9. National cultural institutes or centers abroad promote the language and culture of their respective countries and often include educational opportunities in the home country. Among the BSEC Member States we have the examples of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture in Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia, Tirana and Odessa, the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Moscow, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Istanbul, the Armenian Cultural Center in Moscow etc. National cultural institutes are funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or Ministry of Culture with over-arching policy objectives that relate to external relations.

### **C. Cultural cooperation within the BSEC framework**

10. At the establishment of BSEC, it was not deemed necessary to develop cooperation in the field of culture, due to the Organisation's predominant economic priorities. Nevertheless, PABSEC decided since the beginning to develop a cultural, educational and social dimension of cooperation by creating the respective specialised Committee. At the same time, The Assembly supported and encouraged the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information, which was signed in 1993. In the framework of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee numerous priority issues were identified and relevant recommendations were elaborated on intercultural dialogue, cultural heritage (creation of a regional inventory of cultural heritage, museums cooperation), legal harmonisation in the field of cultural heritage, joint research program on the history of the Black Sea basin, youth cooperation etc. (see part I of the present report.).

11. The growing tendency at international level for direct interconnection of cultural cooperation activities with broader development goals, has lead BSEC to consider the introduction of culture in the intergovernmental cooperation of the Member States. Thus, the BSEC Working Group on Culture was established in 2006, at the initiative of the Greek delegation, by the relevant resolution of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs at its 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Moscow. The Council adopted the Terms of Reference of the Working Group, which include the following general objectives:

- Promotion of intercultural dialogue to foster a positive understanding and building of trust between the peoples of the BSEC region and beyond;
- Fostering the spirit of equality and respect of national cultural traditions;
- Protecting cultural diversity;
- Promotion of the cultural identity of the BSEC Region in the sense of its interconnections as well as of its shared human values, traditions and beliefs;
- Protection of cultural values in the BSEC area;
- Raising awareness and care for the protection of outstanding monuments and sites considered as part of the cultural and natural heritage;
- Encouragement of the harmonization of the legal framework of the BSEC Member States in the field of protection of cultural heritage, in accordance with the relative International Conventions, especially in the framework of UNESCO and the Council of Europe;

- Protection and support of intellectual and artistic activity and creative expressionism in arts, literature, music, cinema, sports, relevant to living cultures (crafts), indigenous knowledge, local traditions and expressions, logographic /ethnographic elements, culinary and other;
- Incorporation of culture in tourism activities within and outside the BSEC region;

12. In their first meeting in Sounio, in July 2007, the Ministers for Culture of the Member States of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) agreed “to proceed with the establishment of an operational framework for the implementation of the priorities set in the agreed Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Culture, through intergovernmental co-operation, engagement of the relevant actors of the BSEC institutional family, in particular the PABSEC and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies, and interaction with the civil society, focusing on the following lines of action:

- a) Fostering balanced and sustainable development by taking into account the significance of cultural heritage and its inherent values;
- b) Undertaking cooperative action, at regional level, for the listing, protection and valorisation of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible;
- c) Strengthening cooperation in the field of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of cultural property;
- d) Building networks of cooperation and developing joint projects in the field of contemporary culture, such as literature, theatre, dance, music and visual arts;
- e) Creating synergies in the field of cultural tourism with related industries;
- f) Reviving ancient routes and creatively developing new ones as vehicles for intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, good neighbourhood relations and social cohesion;
- g) Identifying necessary sources for financing joint projects through national and international public and private funds.”

13. At present, the framework of cooperation within the BSEC in the sphere of culture is set by the Action Plan for 2008-2010, covering the period of Georgia’s term as a Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Culture. The Action Plan sets among the priority fields of activities the following:

- Protection, monitoring and inventorying of Cultural heritage
- Development of cultural tourism
- Promotion of the national cultures among the Member States
- Development of cooperation with UNESCO and the Council of Europe
- Implementation of priorities identified by the previous Action Plan, i.e. “Network of Cooperation in the Field of Contemporary Culture”, “Cultural Itineraries” and “Intercultural Dialogue”

14. After four years of operation, the Working Group has developed a more or less clear orientation towards cooperation in the field of cultural tourism. In this context, the first Joint Meeting of the BSEC Working Groups on Culture and on Cooperation in Tourism was held in Istanbul, at the BSEC Headquarters, on 15-16 June 2009. The participants discussed proposals of cultural itineraries submitted by respective Member States: “The Route of the Rose” (Bulgaria), “The Routes of Coinage” (Greece), “Cultural Route of the Roman Emperors” (Serbia), “The Silk Road” (Turkey), the “Myths of the Two Seas” (Azerbaijan) and the

“Legend of Argonauts” (Georgia). Some of these proposals were already part of the first Action Plan of the Working Group on Culture 2006-2008.

15. Despite the great enthusiasm at its outset and the introduction of many proposals to its agenda, the Working Group on Culture has lost impetus over the years and has been slow in the implementation of projects. In this context, there is a growing need for BSEC to examine the ways and means of renewing the interest of the Member States for cultural cooperation, identifying some flagship projects and facilitating their financing. Developing BSEC programmes for cultural exchanges and organizing common exhibitions in international fora would vivify interaction among the Member States and promote the region’s cultural identity in the international stage.

#### **D. Culture and economic crisis**

16. The global economic crisis has been affecting, to different degrees, all BSEC Member States. The general recession has led to shrinking public budgets with the cultural sector being among the first to be affected. In this climate, expenditures for cultural cooperation are easily considered as a dispensable luxury.

17. The interconnection of culture and development and the role of culture as wealth and job generating sector is to be underlined once again. As stressed in the PABSEC Recommendation 70/2003, “culture can influence the success of development positively affecting the situation in human rights, gender equality, poverty, environmental sustainability, social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and other associated fields. It gives direct economic benefit as well, as a major source of jobs... Societies have to come to the understanding that spending on culture is not an expense, but an investment.”

18. Furthermore, culture must avoid being merely another problem faced by public bodies. Instead, it is imperative for cultural initiatives to develop partnerships in the private sector. Taking into account that corporate sponsorship has also been reduced as companies curb expenditure and that recession has already had an impact on other sources of funds readily accessed by cultural organisations such as charitable trusts and foundations, it is important that the cultural sector be able to show that it offers solutions and positive responses at a time of difficulty.

19. In practical terms, governments would need to create new legislation and incentives to support enterprises – both commercial and non-commercial – in the cultural sector. This could include the elaboration of new financial and economic instruments for cultural businesses and organizations such as the possibility of selective tax breaks in the cultural sector; the regulation of sponsorship and charitable donations; and the possibility of creating foundations that might support non-commercial activities.

20. Finally, education, capacity building and investment in infrastructure are essential in the context of new technologies, which play an increasingly important role in the cultural sector. Policies and initiatives supporting these areas would further stimulate business initiatives in the cultural sector, mobility of artists and international and regional contacts and cooperation.

### III. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND ACTIVITIES

#### A. Legal and policy framework

21. UNESCO has established an important universal legal framework which provides policy measures to support cultural cooperation in several areas. Some of the most relevant instruments in this context are the following:

*Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005*

The Convention aims to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions, creating conditions for cultures to flourish and interact, fostering interculturality and strengthening international cooperation. Guiding principles are set out for the protection and promotion of cultural diversity, as well as the rights and obligations of the contracting States. The Convention also establishes permanent organs to ensure its implementation.

Signatories among the BSEC Member States: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine are.

*Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001*

This Declaration recognises that cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity and reaffirms the intrinsic commitment of cultural diversity to the defence and respect of human dignity and human rights.

*Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist, 1980*

This Recommendation sets out a certain number of rights of artists and calls upon Member States to defend and assist artists and their freedom of expression. It is one of the key legal instruments developed by UNESCO and the respect of its provisions is an important precondition to ensure the cultural mobility of artists respects their rights.

*Recommendation for the protection of movable cultural property, 1978*

This Recommendation aims to protect movable cultural objects against risks of damage, deterioration or loss. The long list of objects covered by this instrument includes products of archaeological exploration, antiquities, items from historical monuments, paintings and drawings, material of anthropological and ethnological interest, items of furniture, music instruments, and many other cultural objects.

*Recommendation concerning the International Exchange of Cultural Property, 1976*

This Recommendation is particularly important for cross-border mobility of cultural goods as it explicitly aims to encourage the circulation of cultural property between UNESCO Member States.

*Declaration of guiding principles on the use of satellite broadcasting for the free flow of information, the spread of education and greater cultural exchange, 1972*

According to this Declaration, satellite broadcasting for the promotion of cultural exchange aims to foster greater contact and mutual understanding between people by permitting audiences to enjoy programmes on each other's social and cultural life, including artistic programmes.

*Convention on the Means of Prohibition and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970*  
All BSEC Member States are signatories.

*Declaration of Principles of International Cultural Cooperation, 1966*

This Declaration states that the aims of international cultural co-operation are to enable everyone to have better access to knowledge and enjoy the arts of all people, to share advances made in science in all parts of the world and to contribute to the enrichment of cultural life.

*Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1954*

This Convention foresees special rules for the transport, under special protection, of protected cultural property in the event of armed conflicts.  
All BSEC Member States are signatories.

*Agreement on the importation of educational, scientific and cultural materials, 1950 (“Florence Agreement”), modified and completed by the “Nairobi Protocol”, 1976*

This Agreement, adopted in Florence, and subsequently amended and completed by a Protocol adopted in Nairobi has become a cornerstone among those international legal instruments facilitating the cross-border circulation of cultural goods and artworks.  
Signatories among the BSEC Member States: Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova Romania, Russia and Serbia.

22. Among other important universal agreements with an impact on cultural cooperation:

*Customs Convention on the ATA carnets for the temporary admission of goods, 1963*

A convention adopted by the World Customs Organization (WCO), also known as the Brussels Convention. It established the “ATA system” which facilitates customs formalities and allows the free movement of goods across frontiers and their temporary admission into a customs territory without any duties and taxes. The ATA carnets is widely used by artists and cultural operators organising international exhibitions and touring performing arts to transport artworks and sets.

Signatories among the BSEC Member States: Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine.

*Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, 1886 (last amended 1979)*

This international agreement governing copyright requires its signatories to recognise the copyright of works of authors from other signatory countries in the same way it recognises the copyright of its own nationals. Independently of the author's economic rights, the Convention also provides for moral rights with protection until 50 years after the author's death.

All BSEC Member States are signatories.

23. At the *regional level*, the Council of Europe is the older and more inclusive institution promoting the rule of law through international treaties, regulatory frameworks and implementation mechanisms which establish fundamental norms and standards for the integrated conservation of cultural and natural heritage, sustainable spatial development, cultural co-operation, and the value and social role of cultural and heritage.

24. One of the key instruments through which the European states, whether members of the Council of Europe or not, expressed their earliest commitments to cultural co-operation is the *European Cultural Convention (1954)*. All BSEC Member States are signatories.

25. Other Council of Europe conventions in the field of Culture are:

- *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1969)* Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Russia are signatories.
- *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985)* All BSEC Member States are parties except Albania.
- *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised, 1992)* All BSEC Members States are signatories.
- *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005)* Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine are signatories.

26. For the European Union, culture is a relatively new sphere of action, at least from a legal standpoint: the legal basis for EU action in this field was introduced in 1993 with the *Maastricht Treaty*. The Maastricht Treaty enabled the EU, which was historically geared towards the economy and trade, to take action in the field of culture in order to safeguard, disseminate and develop culture in Europe.

The European Commission encourages culture in two ways:

- through policies, chiefly cultural policy, but also by mainstreaming the cultural dimension in other areas of EU interest such as for instance in competition or industrial policy;
- and through financial support, primarily via the Culture Programme (2007-2013), but also via other actions such as for example within the framework of regional policy.

## **B. Regional initiatives and funding opportunities**

27. The Culture Programme (2007-2013) of the European Commission is its main instrument to support cultural cooperation projects in Europe. The aim of the multi-annual Programme is to encourage and support cultural cooperation within Europe in order to bring the European common cultural heritage to the fore. The Programme proposes funding opportunities to all cultural sections and all categories of cultural operators contributing to the development of cultural cooperation at European level, with a view to encouraging the emergence of European citizenship. The Programme is aimed at three specific objectives:

- promotion of the trans-national mobility of people working in the cultural sector;
- support for the trans-national circulation of cultural and artistic works and products;
- promotion of inter-cultural dialogue.

28. The BSEC Member States taking part in the Programme are Bulgaria, Greece and Romania as EU Members and Serbia and Turkey as candidate countries. Albania is also expected to join the programme in the future.

29. Of relevance to the countries covered by the Black Sea Synergy of the EU, the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2007-2013 (Black Sea JOP) is a programme under the European Neighbourhood & Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The overall objective of the Black Sea JOP is to achieve stronger regional partnerships and cooperation by contributing to a stronger and more sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin in line with the Black Sea Synergy. The programme's three specific objectives are: 1.Promoting economic and social development in the border areas; 2.Working together to address common challenges; 3.Promoting local, people-to-people cooperation. The projects will be jointly submitted and implemented by partnerships that will always involve partners from one or several EU Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania) and from one or several partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine) and Turkey. Among the priorities of the Black Sea JOP is supporting cultural and educational networks for the establishment of a common cultural environment in the Basin through promoting cultural networking and educational exchange in the Black Sea Basin communities.

30. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), of which Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine are member states, supports the development of the cultural cooperation among the member states through the Council on Cultural Cooperation. The main activities of the Council are among others: the analysis of the patterns of cultural development within the CIS; the reviewing and drafting of multilateral programs in the field of culture; the coordination of joint activities among the member states. The Parliamentary dimension of CIS assures the legislative framework on cultural cooperation through the Permanent Committee on Culture, Information, Tourism and Sport, which has elaborated numerous model codes, model laws and recommendations on culture.

31. The Central European Initiative (CEI), of which Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine are Member States, financially supports diverse projects in the field of music, literature, performing arts as well as training courses and seminars proposed by the member countries. Its activities are also focused on intercultural dialogue, preservation of cultural and religious diversity, supporting cross-border co-operation in the artistic field - including mobility of individuals and groups.

32. Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia also participate in the Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe 2003-2011. This is a joint programme for technical assistance of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, aiming to enhance cooperation and exchange of experience between neighbouring countries facing similar situations in the fields of protection, conservation, rehabilitation and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage. Strong emphasis is placed on the urban and rural management, democratic and participatory processes, and the improvement of living conditions and quality of life.

33. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are participating in the Kyiv Initiative Regional Programme, a multilateral programme of the Council of Europe to encourage cross border cultural cooperation. The programme focuses on five themes – heritage management, the shaping of cultural policy, film, literature, wine culture and tourism

exchange. Through a series of projects designed to encourage cross border collaboration, the Kyiv Initiative aims to enable the sharing of expertise and the development of competence and skills in both towns and the countryside. The Kyiv Initiative is funded by the Council of Europe, national and local governments and the private sector in the participating countries and the support of governments, trusts, foundations and business from elsewhere in Europe.

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

34. Culture is an important driver for personal development, social cohesion, economic growth, creation of jobs, innovation and competitiveness. Cultural cooperation among the BSEC Member States can have positive impact on their broader cooperation process and the peoples of the region by enhancing mutual understanding; bringing in economic benefits to the peoples; and having a sustainability aspect for the societies of the region.

35. The variety of cultural identities and values of the BSEC region represents a key resource for enhancing political dialogue, developing economic co-operation and ensuring stability through mutual knowledge and appreciation of the countries' cultural assets.

36. In order to make use of this cultural potential, the Member States should mobilise the available resources and maximise their human capital. As financing is a key element in cultural activities, BSEC Member States should also address the challenge of linking culture and economy and focus on building public-private partnerships.

37. BSEC and its Related Bodies could further enhance their cooperation in the field of culture, particularly by identifying priorities, developing joint strategies and programs, as well as seeking partnerships with other regional and international bodies and non-governmental networks for cultural cooperation.