



BS/CT/WG/R(2007)2

**REPORT OF THE
MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
COOPERATION IN TOURISM**

Istanbul, 17-18 October 2007

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism was held in Istanbul on 17-18 October 2007.
2. Mr. Mesut ÖZBEK, Head of the External Relations and EU Coordination Department, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, delivered an opening statement. The text of the statement is attached to the present Report as Annex I.
3. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Talat ÖZGEN, Culture and Tourism Expert, External Relations and EU Coordination Department, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey.
4. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:

Republic of Armenia
Republic of Azerbaijan
Republic of Bulgaria
Hellenic Republic
Republic of Moldova
Russian Federation
Republic of Serbia
Republic of Turkey
Ukraine
5. The representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of BSEC (PABSEC) and the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC) participated in the Meeting in their capacity as BSEC Related Bodies.
6. The representatives of the Federation of Associations of Travel Agencies of the Balkan Region (BAFTAA)/Hellenic Association of Travel and Tourism Agencies (HATTA), of Turkish Travel Agencies Associations, (TÜRSAB) and of Ataköy Marina also participated in the Meeting as Guests.

The list of participants of the Meeting is attached as Annex II.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as Annex III.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL (15th BSEC COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 2006) AND THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATIONS AND JOINT STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TOURISM OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES (IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TOURISM OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES – RHODES DECLARATION, 31 MARCH 2005):

8. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS representative on the follow-up of the implementation of the Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the 15th BSEC Council (Moscow, 1 November 2006) with regard to the obligation of the Working Group to submit an Evolution Report prior to each Meeting of the Council.

9. Hellenic Republic in its capacity as the Country-Coordinator pointed out that since there were no new elements to be added to the Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the 15th Council and on the Follow-up of the Joint Statements adopted by the Ministers Responsible for Tourism of the BSEC Member States they presented at the previous Meeting of the Working Group in Belgrade in April 2007, the said Report should be submitted to the next Meeting of the Council to be held in Ankara on 25 October 2007.

PRESENTATION AND CONSIDERATION OF IDEAS AND PROJECTS IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM AMONG BSEC MEMBER STATES (FOLLOW-UP OF ELABORATION OF THE PROPOSALS OF NATIONAL DELEGATIONS AGREED AT THE MEETINGS OF THE WG ON COOPERATION IN TOURISM IN ISTANBUL IN OCTOBER 2006 AND IN BELGRADE IN APRIL 2007)

10. The participants at the Working Group discussed ideas and concrete commitments taken by Member States at previous Meetings of the Working Group, i.e., in Istanbul (October 2006) and in Belgrade, (April 2007).

a) State of affairs with regard to publishing a brochure on Tourism in BSEC Countries

11. While taking into consideration the importance of publishing a brochure on tourism facilities in BSEC countries, the Working Group decided at this stage to proceed with linking the web-sites of their official tourism authorities with:

- the official BSEC website;

- the Business Council web-site as it was proposed by the Secretary General of the BSEC Business Council

12. The Business Council also informed the participants about the web-based Black Sea Business Information Gateway, which includes a continuously expanding section on the cultures of the people of the BSEC Region.

13. The participants of the Meeting thanked the Business Council for the offer and agreed to send all relevant information through PERMIS by 30 November 2007.

b) Assessment on possibilities for providing “Visa Facilitation for Tourism among BSEC Member States”

14. The Country-Coordinator communicated through PERMIS to the Member States the results and Summary Proceedings of the Seminar on “Visa Facilitation for Cooperation between EU and the Wider Black Sea Area” held in the island of Kos (Hellenic Republic), on 18-19 May 2007.

15. The participants stressed the importance of visa facilitation for tourism activities in the BSEC Member States and decided to explore possibilities for further cooperation in this field.

c) Participation at Tourist Events and Fairs held in the other Member States

16. The Working Group stressed the importance of regular exchange of information on tourist events and fairs organized in their countries in order to ensure the participation of as many Member States as possible.

17. Several delegations informed the Working Group on the date and venue of these events and it was generally accepted to communicate further information on the issue through BSEC PERMIS.

Forthcoming Tourist Events:

18. The representative of the Republic of Turkey informed the Working Group on the EMITT Fair to be held in Istanbul on 14-17 February 2008.

19. The representative of the Republic of Bulgaria informed the participants about the following tourist fairs and events to be held in Bulgaria in 2008:

a. 25th International Holiday Tourist Fair in Sophia in February;

b. Tourism Forum in Varna on 1-4 November;

c. Hotel, Restaurants and Equipment Fair in Sofia on 17-27 October.

20. The representative of the Russian Federation informed the participants about the Exhibition “INTOURMARKET 2008” to be held in Moscow on 15-18 March 2008.

21. The representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan informed the Working Group on the Azerbaijan International Tourism Fair to be held in Baku on 16-18 April 2008.

MARITIME AND NAUTICAL TOURISM COOPERATION AMONG MEMBER STATES

22. The representatives of the Hellenic Republic, underlining the crucial importance of maritime and nautical tourism cooperation among BSEC Member States, announced by the Rhodes Declaration of the Ministers of Tourism (31 March 2005) recommended that the Working Group collect the legislative frameworks concerning maritime tourism in order to elaborate a common terminology for various categories of tourism ports. In this context the Working Group could facilitate the establishment of network marinas of the BSEC Member States in order to promote partnership of cultural exchanges, nautical fairs, regattas, rallies, sea routes etc. The presentation is attached as Annex IV to the Report.

23. The representatives of the Republic of Turkey made a presentation on marine tourism in Turkey. The presentation is attached as Annex V to the Report.

24. The Working Group agreed to encourage the participation of the representatives of the Member States' private sector responsible for maritime and nautical tourism in the Working Group meetings, on a regular basis and to work more closely on legal aspects in that area.

REVIEW AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON NATIONAL POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BSEC COUNTRIES

25. The delegation of the Hellenic Republic in its capacity as Country-Coordinator of the WG on Cooperation in Tourism informed briefly on UNWTO and the European Commission major activities and recent initiatives, and undertook a commitment to communicate the Report of the Tourism Sustainability Group entitled “Action for More Sustainable European Tourism” to PERMIS.

26. The delegation of Turkey made a presentation on national policies and best practices in the field of sustainable tourism development.

27. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed of the outcomes of BSEC Conference “Development of Resort and Tourist infrastructure in the Black Sea Region” held in Gelendjik on 13-15 September 2007.

ACTIVITIES RELATIVE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL AUTHORITIES REPRESENTATIVES OF TOURISM INDUSTRIES AND OF PROFESSIONAL AGENCIES

28. The Working Group agreed to further develop cooperation between Governmental Authorities and private sector thus attracting the attention of national tour operators for cooperation within BSEC framework.

29. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey informed about the participation of private sector and public sector on the stage of planning and building infrastructure on the areas allocated for tourism.

30. The President of the Hellenic Association of Tourism and Travel Agencies (HATTA) informed the Working Group on the activities of the Federation of Associations of Travel Agencies of the Balkan Region (BAFTAA) and proposed the establishment of a respective body, a network of the associations of travel agencies of the BSEC Member States.

31. The participants agreed to forward this proposal to the associations of travel agencies of their countries for consideration and to encourage them to cooperate for the establishment of the above mentioned network.

32. The Secretary General of the BSEC Business Council supported the proposal of the President of BAFTAA to work towards extending the Balkan network to the rest of the region. He offered close cooperation of the Business Council in catalyzing the creation of such an organization.

33. The Working Group agreed on the need to involve more actively in its activities private organizations working in the field of tourism in the Black Sea region.

34. The representative of the Republic of Serbia informed the Working Group on the new organization of the tourism sector in Serbia and establishing the Tourism Development State Agency.

35. The representative of the Republic of Bulgaria stressed the importance of creating a common branding of the Black Sea region as an attractive tourism area.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON TOURISM (BELGRADE, APRIL 2007), ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN OF THE WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN TOURISM, ADOPTED IN MARCH 2005 AND RESPECTIVELY IN 2007:

a) General overview:

36. The Representative of the Country-Coordinator presented to the participants of the Working Group a brief synopsis of the latest activities of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism.

b) Priority fields of activity during the term-in office of Greece as Country Coordinator of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism (Establishment of the Standing Secretariat on Cooperation in the Hellenic Republic, cooperation with EU and other international institutions, etc)

37. The participants appreciated the important efforts of the Hellenic Republic in implementing the resolution of the Council establishing the BSEC Standing Secretariat on Cooperation in Tourism.

38. The Working Group took note of the thorough presentation by the Hellenic delegation on the specific competences, legal framework and structure outline of the said Secretariat. The Hellenic presentation is attached as Annex VI to the Report.

CREATING A COMMON MARKETING COUNCIL IN GEORGIA

39. The topic was postponed to the next meeting of the Working Group.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

40. The Country-Coordinator of the Working Group proposed to the Working Group that the next Meeting of the said Group be decided through diplomatic channels and with the consent of the next Chairman-In-Office, Ukraine.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

41. The Participants expressed their gratitude to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey for the hospitality extended to them in Istanbul and the excellent organization of the Meeting.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

42. The Working Group adopted the present Report and submitted it for consideration to the next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of BSEC Member States.
