

BSEC
INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL AND GOOD GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP
ACTION PLAN (2016 – 2017)

The Republic of Bulgaria Country Coordinator

1. INTRODUCTION

The Economic crisis has proved the need to reassess how core public sector values - such as integrity, transparency, accountability, responsiveness and inclusiveness, as well as equity, fairness and the rule of law - can be rethought and strengthened in an ongoing bases to safeguard the public interest while promoting innovation as a tool to deliver public services in a cost saving and effective manner.

The quality of public administration is important for economic competitiveness and societal well-being. At a time when all countries are facing increasing pressures on public budgets, the challenge of ensuring high-quality public services requires technological and organizational innovation to boost efficiency. This applies both in public administration and in delivering public services and quality public investment. At the same time, good governance and legal certainty are necessary for a stable business environment. It is essential that the institutions that govern economic and social interactions within a country fulfill a number of key criteria. These criteria include the absence of corruption, a workable approach to competition and procurement policy, an effective legal environment and an independent and efficient judicial system. Moreover, strengthening institutional and administrative capacity, reducing the administrative burden and improving the quality of legislation underpins structural adjustments and fosters economic growth and employment.

Transparent, responsible, accountable and participatory administration is the foundation on the good governance. Moreover, the good governance and the building of effective democratic institutions are a continuous process for all Governments.

2. BROADER LANDSCAPE

The Joint Declaration on Institutional Renewal and Good Governance of the Ministers in charge of Public Administration and the Ministers of Justice of the BSEC Member States adopted in Athens, 21 February 2005, envisages the cooperation in policy formulation and implementation in several key reform areas such as identification and exchange of best

practices in human resources management, promotion of interaction between civil society and public administration structures, cooperation in technical issues and know-how etc.

At its last Meeting held at BSEC Headquarters, on 16-17 May 2013, the Working Group on Institutional Renewal and Good Governance (WG on IR & GG) examined the implementation of the Action Plan 2011-2013 and decided to focus on the following actions: Developing its cooperation with other international organizations; Online Vehicle Registration Service; Law Drafting and Management of Stock of Legislation. The 27th Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Odessa in June 2013, adopted the last Recommendation on the WG on IR & GG: *“The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs took note of the meeting of the WG on Institutional Renewal and Good Governance held on 16-17 May, 2013 and recommend it to proceed further with the execution of the Plan of Action 2011-2013”*.

Nevertheless after the last meeting of the WG on IR & GG the BSEC PERMIS under the CiO of Armenia (second half of 2013) and Bulgaria (first half of 2014) tried to organize meetings of the WG but for reason of quorum they were canceled.

Without a Country Coordinator there were no activities of the WG for more than two years and thus the presented Action Plan of the WG on IR & GG for 2016 – 2017 is not preceded by a medium-term (2013-2015) Achievements Report.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Guided by the goals in the field of institutional renewal and good governance contained in “The BSEC Economic Agenda Towards an Enhanced Partnership”, adopted by the Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BSEC (Belgrade, 11 June 2012), the following general objectives of the Working Group on Institutional renewal and good governance are set:

GOAL 15: Good Governance and the Rule of Law: Strengthening the capacity of the Member States in conducting civil service and public administration reforms in line with the best governance and administration practices:

1. Supporting the efforts of the BSEC Member States towards improving national legislations in the sphere of civil service and public administration in line with the best practices.

2. Encouraging the BSEC Member States to promote civil society participation in providing good governance through their involvement in processes of securing integrity, transparency and fight against corruption.

3. Sharing best practices among the BSEC Member States aimed at improving public finance and human resources management.

4. Supporting the efforts of the BSEC Member States with regard to innovation and e-government.

5. Facilitating the exchange of experiences, best practices, success stories and lessons learnt in the field of administrative and institutional reform among the BSEC Member States.

6. Conducting studies, with the support of relevant international organizations, in the field of good governance, public sector efficiency and institutional renewal in BSEC Member States.

7. Initiating training of civil servants in innovative practices, with a view to improving the quality and delivery of public services and the simplification of the administrative procedures.

4. PRIORITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP

Based on medium term prioritization made by the Working Group of Goal 15 of the Economic Agenda, the Working Group intends to focus on the following priorities for the period 2016-2017:

I) Civil society and Market sector participation in Good Governance process;

II) Transparency and Anti-Corruption;

III) Development of E-government and Innovations of delivering public services;

IV) Capacity development for formulating strategies and policies.

5. MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES

The implementation of the measures and activities listed below is expected to promote the above mentioned priorities of the Working Group on Institutional Renewal and Good Governance. Thus, concerted efforts will focus on:

I) Civil society and Market sector participation in Good Governance process

Good governance requires that civil society has the opportunity to participate during the formulation of development strategies and that directly affected communities and groups should be able to participate in the design and implementation of programmes and projects. Even where projects have a secondary impact on particular localities or population groups, there should be a consultation process that takes their views into account. This aspect of governance is an essential element in securing commitment and support for projects and

enhancing the quality of their implementation. For the achievement of this priority the following measures are foreseen:

- Government-citizens interaction, control of the legitimacy and effectiveness of public administration actions;
- Enhancement of the role of public-private partnerships;
- Promotion of interaction between civil society and public administration structures.

Action	Time
Spreading publication, law drafts and other information materials regarding to government-citizens interaction	Oct. 2016
Involving of the BSEC MS representatives to the experts discussions on bilateral and multilateral bases around public-private partnerships	April 2017
Conducting a conference with the participation of government officials, ministers from BSEC MS and representatives of NGOs and businesses on theme: “Transparency and Civil society and Market sector participation in Good Governance process”	April 2017- Oct. 2017
Dissemination of the combined information	July 2017

II) Transparency and Anti-Corruption

Corruption corrodes democracy, discourages foreign investment and is a significant obstacle to development. It is also morally wrong. Corrupt society is an unhealthy society. The combating and prevention of corruption is a priority in respect of the existing BSEC Member States. In Black Sea region the member countries have different mechanisms to fight against corruption and it will be positive for all partners to share knowledge and experiences on anti-corruption mechanism of each partner country. For the achievement of this priority the following measures are foreseen:

- Create framework for exchange of information among BSEC Member States;
- Improvement the quality and delivery of public services and the simplification of the administrative procedures;
- Exchange of experience and good practices about strategies and methods of anti-corruption.

Action	Time
Presentations on Transparency/Fight Against Corruption experience in BSEC Member States. Generate a network between central bodies responsible for transparency/Fight against Corruption	Nov. 2016
Create framework for exchange of information among BSEC Member States including following subjects: Right to access to information; Anti-Corruption Strategy; Central body to ensure coordination among other public institutions to fight against corruption; Effective implementation of code of conduct for public officials; Embed ethical culture in public administration through training programs, awareness raising activities and investigations for the high level public official who are alleged to violate ethical standards; Collaboration with civil society and private sector organizations to disseminate ethical culture throughout the country; The role of central bodies to promote transparency in public sector;	April 2017
Bilateral study visits between interested states. Share knowledge and experience. (financed by each partner)	Apr 2017- Nov 2017
Dissemination of the combined information	July 2017

III) Development of E-governance and Innovations

E-Government promises to increase efficiency and effectiveness and generate public value in service delivery. However, realization of these benefits depends on successful implementation of E-Government projects. For the achievement of this priority the following measures are foreseen:

- Improvement of the knowledge on innovating practices of the use of technology and communications to foster e-government;
- Cooperation in technical issues and know-how transfer regarding the citizens' right to free access to public information;
- Open date for key sectoral policies.

Action	Time
Training of civil servants on innovating practices of the use of technology and communications to foster e-government	April 2016
Organizing information campaigns on consumer awareness on the use of electronic services	April 2017

Sharing best practices among the BSEC Member States aimed at development of E-governance	July 2017
Dissemination of the combined information	July 2017

IV) Capacity Development for Formulating Strategies and Policies

A country's successful development hinges on having sufficient capacity. While financial resources, including official development assistance are vital, they are not enough to promote sustainable human development. Without supportive strategies, policies, laws and procedures, well-functioning organizations and educated and skilled people, countries lack the foundation to plan, implement and review their national and local development strategies. For the achievement of this priority the following measures are foreseen:

- Sharing of best practices in human resources management among the BSEC Member States;
- Establishment of a regional network for public policy dialogue and enhancing capacity for policy reform;
- Exchange experience with International and European organizations.

Action	Time
Organizing a conference among the BSEC Member States on topic: "Good practices in human resources management in public sector as a prerequisite for enhancing institutional capacity"	April 2016- Oct. 2016
Training for senior civil servants on the development of so-called "soft skills" in order to improve institutional capacity and achieve the performance of the administrations	April 2017
Conduct training on strategic planning in the national administrations of the BSEC Member States	July 2017
Dissemination of the combined information	July 2017

6. MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP

1st Meeting (Istanbul, BSEC HQ, 2 November 2015) - adoption of the Plan of Action.

2nd Meeting (Istanbul, BSEC HQ, Autumn 2016) – follow-up of the main priorities of the Working Group in conformity with the general objectives of cooperation;

3rd Meeting (Istanbul, BSEC HQ, Spring 2017) – implementation of the main priorities of the Working Group in conformity with the general objectives of cooperation.

4th Meeting (Istanbul, BSEC HQ, Autumn 2017) – implementation of the main priorities of the Working Group in conformity with the general objectives of cooperation.

7. COOPERATION WITH OTHER BSEC BODIES

- Interaction with the Working Groups on Cooperation in Science and Technology, on Education and on ICT, inter alia, by convening joint meetings of the mentioned Groups.
- Development of interaction with Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners.

8. COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Examining practical ways and means for developing and further extending cooperation of BSEC with international organizations such as OECD, World Bank and EU.

9. GENERAL EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This Action plan will facilitate peer learning and the exchange of good practice on public governance in the BSEC and developing partnerships with global partners and other countries.

The work will help Governments to achieve a better understanding of the challenges to deliver more efficient public services in relevant areas. Governments would become more resilient to constantly changing political and economic challenges and identify practical solutions for change. It will also help to consolidate trust and enhance resistance to fraud, corruption and unethical behaviors.

By providing countries with experimented, policy-relevant information and analysis of good governance and efficient and effective public administration, the Action plan will help them assess their performance and identify further reform options.

The Action plan is designed to facilitate a policy dialogue on public governance issues where the Working Group serves as a point of reference. It pays attention to the specific needs of Member States offering insights for building capacity for public governance in a global perspective.