



BS/CT/WG/R(2006)1

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

Bucharest, 7-8 April 2006

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group (WG) on Cooperation in Tourism was held in Bucharest, Romania on 7-8 April 2006.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Cristina MOTORGA, Director General, Department for Promotion and International Relations, the National Authority for Tourism in Romania.
3. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Albania
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - Republic of Bulgaria
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Turkey
 - Ukraine
4. The Meeting was attended by the representative of the Republic of Belarus as an Observer State.
5. The representatives of the Danube Tourism Commission (Vienna), ANTREC (National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism-Romania), ANAT (Association of Travel Agencies-Romania), RCB (Romanian Convention Bureau), Association B&B (Romanian Association for Accommodation and Ecological Tourism), and Romanian Employers Organization of Spa Tourism (OPTBR) attended the Meeting as official Guests.

The list of participants in the Meeting is attached as Annex I.

6. H.E. Mr. Ovidiu Iuliu MARIAN, President of the National Authority for Tourism in Romania, delivered an opening statement.

7. Ambassador Altai EFENDIEV, Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS addressed the Participants of the Meeting with opening remarks.

8. The draft agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The agenda, as adopted, is attached as Annex II.

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

9. The representative of the Hellenic Delegation provided comprehensive information on the latest developments in the area of sustainable development of tourism in Greece in compliance with the Guidelines of the EU 21 Directives for Tourism.

10. National delegations provided information on the recent developments in their tourism industries, as well as on the incentives offered in order to promote the development of tourism at national and regional levels.

11. The WG took note with interest of the information provided by the representative of the Danube Tourism Commission on the progress in the cooperation in the tourism field among the countries along the Danube River, as well as information concerning good practices that could be applied by the BSEC Member States in order to promote regional cooperation in the tourism sector.

PROGRESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE BSEC TOURISM COOPERATION SINCE ITS ADOPTION IN MARCH 2005

12. The representative of the Hellenic Republic informed the participants on the most recent developments and measures undertaken by the Country-Coordinator for the implementation of the Action Plan of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism for 2004-2006.

13. The Working Group welcomed the outcomes of the seminar on tourism: “Bringing BSEC Closer to Europe: Train the Trainers” held in Athens on 6–17 November 2005. The Participants considered this event as being a success and a useful initiative undertaken by the Hellenic Republic in its capacity as Country-Coordinator of the WG and invited other Member States to examine the possibilities of organizing similar events in the nearest future.

14. The WG took note with interest of the information provided by the Hellenic Delegation on the further progress in the reconstruction works of the legendary ship “ARGO”. The expedition along the historic route of the Argonauts to the Eastern shores of the Black Sea with fifty EU representatives on board of “ARGO” ship is expected to be launched by the end of 2006.

15. The WG also took note of the information presented by the Hellenic Delegation on the ongoing internal procedures to be fulfilled soon that will pave the way for the establishment of the Standing Secretariat on Cooperation in Tourism in Greece, in accordance with the relevant Resolution of the 12th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States (Komotini, 23 April 2005).

16. Furthermore, the Delegation of the Hellenic Republic mentioned that, following the consultations between the Greek Ministry of Tourism and the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the establishment of a Standing Secretariat on Cooperation in Tourism, the Legal Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued an official legal opinion on the various possible legal forms that this Secretariat could take under the Greek Law and in accordance with the relevant stipulations of the BSEC Charter. Taking stock of this legal opinion a Committee of Greek experts will elaborate concrete proposals to the Greek Ministry of Tourism concerning the most appropriate legal form of the Secretariat, as well as its structure so that it can perform the tasks entrusted to it by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Greece will continue keeping the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism informed on any further development. The complete progress report of the Hellenic Delegation is attached as Annex III.

17. The Delegation of the Republic of Turkey informed on the recent developments in the Training Plan on the Diversification of Tourism Products (Case study: “Ayaş – Sapanca Corridor of the Silk Road”). The WG welcomed the invitation extended by the representative of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey for the participation to the seminar to be held on 29 May - 4 June 2006.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON “SPECIALIZED SALON ON TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA REGION” (BUCHAREST, 6 – 9 APRIL 2006)

18. The background information on the issue and the objectives of the initiative was provided by the representative of the Romanian Delegation in the capacity of the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

19. The WG expressed their appreciation of the initiative which is proved to be useful to promote BSEC, enhance the visibility of the BSEC region, as well as to develop useful contacts and for networking. Participants suggested that BSEC pavilions should be organized on a regular basis.

20. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Romanian Tourism Authorities for organizing BSEC pavilion and covering the hospitality expenses as well as cost of exhibition spaces allotted to the national delegations of the BSEC Member States. The WG highly praised the initiative of Romania and consider this practice as useful and to be followed by other Member States.

PRESENTATION AND CONSIDERATION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS OF COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM AMONG BSEC MEMBER STATES

21. Participants exchanged views and ideas on the prospects and challenges their tourism industries face and shared views and ideas on some common issues that can be addressed in the framework of BSEC. The delegations submitted their proposals for further consideration with the view of elaboration of possible multilateral projects in the tourism field within the BSEC framework.

The following proposals and project ideas were put forward:

a) In view of the dynamic development of the tourism sector in Azerbaijan, national Delegation shared their views about most pressing needs of the national tourist industry and advanced the following proposals:

- to consider the possibility of organizing on a regular basis the training program for the professional personnel employed in the tourist industry;
- to create a system for promotion of investment opportunities in the development of tourism infrastructure in the BSEC region;
- to develop a database and to ensure regular exchange of information on the most important developments in the sector;
- to organize a training program for the hotel personnel (hospitality industry);
- to organize a regional conference in the framework of BSEC on education and training of personnel in tourism.

b) The Delegation of Georgia proposed the creation of a common Marketing Council within BSEC, which could work to promote the Black Sea as an entire tourist destination, provided that there is no overlapping with the activities of the future Standing Secretariat on Tourism to be established in Athens. The Georgian Department of Tourism and Resorts invited the representatives of the state tourism authorities of BSEC Member States to a meeting in Batumi, Georgia in June 2006, in order to discuss the organizational and legal aspects of the implementation of this proposal. The board and lodging expenses of the delegations will be provided by the host country.

c) The Delegation of Romania put forward the following proposals in order to promote regional and inter-regional cooperation in tourism:

- to promote the Black Sea tourism under the BSEC umbrella at major international fairs and exhibitions by using common stands and promotional material;
- to develop cooperation between BSEC and the Danube Tourism Commission with a view of sharing experience and know-how in the field of tourism marketing;
- to consider the possibility of publishing of a manual on visa facilitation for tourism in the BSEC Member States as well as the possibility of the conclusion of an agreement among the BSEC Member States on visa facilitation for tourism.

d) The representative of the Hellenic Delegation informed the participants on the following proposals:

- A project idea put forward by the specialized company “Agrotouristiki SA” of Greece under the title “Agrotourism Certification System in the BSEC Area” with a view of possible development of the project under the umbrella of BSEC Project Development Fund. The description of the project idea is attached as Annex IV.

- A project idea of promotional activities for the development of wine tourism (incorporating ethnic food) among Greece, Turkey and Russia. The proposal comprises various actions to be taken in the three involved countries for the exchange of experience and know-how among wine producers, businessmen, journalists, the public and the creation of wine routes.

22. The WG took note of the proposals made by the Delegation of the Hellenic Republic in a positive manner and asked the involved Member States to present at the next meeting of the WG, detailed projects proposals in compliance with PDF requirements. Furthermore, due to the fact that the Council of Europe elaborates similar projects, the WG expressed its wish to examine possible cooperation between the two organizations and entrusted the Project Coordinator of BSEC PERMIS to examine the possibilities of eventual common actions and funding of the Wine Routes Projects.

23. Other participants of the meeting, representatives of the private sector, while putting forward their proposals for consideration in the framework of the BSEC WG on Cooperation in Tourism, emphasized the need for establishing close cooperation between representatives of the National authorities and representatives of the tourism industries and professional agencies in order to successfully implement the provisions of the Ministerial Declarations as well as identify common features and develop feasible regional projects.

24. The following proposals have been tabled by the representatives of the professional agencies:

- to create a common system of professional training to promote technical and professional standards;
- to develop a system of information exchange about new developments in the field, about companies operating in the field, important tourist events etc.;
- to create promotional regional portal on the internet;
- to set up a common system to promote “Bed-&-Breakfast Concept” as well thematic tours (specifically SPA tours) in the BSEC region.

25. The WG invited the Member States to communicate, at their earliest convenience, their opinion regarding the feasibility of the above-mentioned proposals.

26. The WG also invited the National Delegations to elaborate further on their ideas and proposals expressed during the meeting and to prepare appropriate background papers and formulate project proposals for consideration at the next meeting of the WG on Cooperation in Tourism.

27. It was also agreed that the Member States will communicate to the BSEC PERMIS at their earliest convenience the information on the calendar of tourist events in their respective countries. BSEC PERMIS will compile this information and disseminate to the Participants of the meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

28. The Delegation of the Russian Federation invited the participants to the most important tourism event of their country entitled “INTOURMARKET” which will take place in Moscow on 18-21 March 2007.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

29. The exact date and venue of that Meeting will be communicated to the Member States through BSEC PERMIS in due course.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

30. The Participants expressed their deep gratitude to the National Authority for Tourism in Romania and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania for the genuine hospitality extended to the national delegations and for the excellent organization of the meeting of the WG on Cooperation in Tourism in Bucharest.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

31. The Working Group adopted the present Report and submitted it for consideration to the Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States to be held in Bucharest, Romania, on 26 April 2006.
