

BSEC PUBLIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

I. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION OBJECTIVES

Communication is essential for any organization to present its objectives, works, projects and achievements in a clear and coherent manner to its stakeholders and ultimately to the general public.

The communication activities of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) should be effective, relevant, forward looking, constructive and accurate.

The BSEC Public Communication Strategy should enhance the image of the Organization as an effective instrument that brings different actors from governmental and non-governmental level together, and by this, contributes to the development and well-being of the peoples of its Member States.

The BSEC Public Communication Strategy will highlight the work conducted by the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Sectoral Ministerial Meetings and BSEC Subsidiary Organs (Working Groups, Ad Hoc Working Groups, Groups of Experts and Steering Committees) as well as the BSEC Related Bodies.

As an intergovernmental economic cooperation organization, BSEC will conduct an active and a passive flow of information to its stakeholders and to the public.

Active flow of information → actively and directly inform in general, and where required, in detail, about its ongoing/future work and projects

Passive flow of information → answer to specific questions from stakeholders and the public

II. THE STAKEHOLDERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The first group of stakeholders is represented by **the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and other competent government authorities of the Member States**. These should, in principle, have full access to public information related to the activities of the Organization.

The second group of stakeholders consists of **the BSEC Related Bodies, Observers**

and Sectoral Dialogue Partners. They receive all relevant information the Member States are offered, with the exception of internal budgetary information, information related to the internal functioning of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) and other issues addressed in an in camera format.

The third group of stakeholders is represented by **the intermediaries.** Being the group with the biggest influence on the public opinion about the image of the Organization, **it is comprised of the press and media representatives.** Recent years have shown that not only traditional media, but also social media using blogs, Twitter and Facebook have accumulated a great number of followers. It is necessary to have regular contacts and to work closely with this group by creating and developing these types of new media instruments.

The fourth group of stakeholders consists of **intergovernmental, non-governmental and civil society organizations which work together with BSEC on common projects.** The image these stakeholders have of BSEC needs to be upheld as a positive, energetic, efficient and forward-looking organization that is beneficial to cooperate with because it adds value to the region and its people. This group has access to information relevant for their participation in common projects.

The fifth group of stakeholders comprises **other intergovernmental, non-governmental and civil society organizations with which BSEC and its Related Bodies are not (yet) cooperating, but which would be interested in being informed about ongoing projects and the impact these can possibly have on them and their working areas.** This group will continue to be informed by the means of general communication and the BSEC PERMIS will take appropriate proactive actions in order to make a database, invite them to participate in future events and convert them into future partners.

The sixth group of stakeholders is represented by **national and regional circles and institutions which BSEC is cooperating or could cooperate with, such as universities, think-tanks, schools, banks, local administrations, political parties and local authorities of the Host Country.** This group, considered in the context of the means of general communication, will be periodically and gradually addressed with additional information on the topics of interest, in order to enhance their collaboration with BSEC.

The seventh group of stakeholders consists of **business organizations and companies BSEC is working with on various projects within the process of economic cooperation.** This group, currently considered in the context of the means of general communication, will be periodically and gradually addressed with additional information on the topics of interest, in order to enhance their collaboration with BSEC.

The general public can be considered as the largest and most important stakeholder of BSEC, since it is the well-being, development and prosperity of the peoples of the region which is the ultimate reason for the Organization's existence. Active feedback from them should be encouraged by an open communication policy, which provides ample opportunities for an interactive two-way communication process. It is

recommended that new media instruments be used in informing this group of BSEC activities and projects.

III. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The communication environment of inter-governmental organizations depends on a number of factors, which include the structure of the mass media, the available audiovisual channels, the size of the audience reached by the media and the variety of new information and communication technologies.

Within this scope, organizations can develop their specific communication objectives, which should consider a range of questions, including what issues should be prioritised, what messages about the organization should be conveyed, what groups and sectors are the targets for the communication and what channels can be used.

The communication of an organization is the main strategic tool to inform its stakeholders and the public about the organization's positioning, objectives, perspectives and goals.

As such, the BSEC Public Communication Strategy should allow a clear understanding and definition about the following topics:

A) The exact **positioning** of the Organization:

BSEC is a regional intergovernmental economic cooperation organization, with its headquarters in Istanbul. It serves the economic interests of its 12 Member States.

B) The Organization's **values and ethics**:

As an organization, BSEC follows the principles of good governance and transparency, is truthful in its work and statements, conforms to the highest standards of international interaction in its activities and upholds a fair, respectful and interactive atmosphere of work and cooperation.

C) The Organization's **vision, mission and objectives**:

In accordance with Article 3 of the BSEC Charter, the following principles and objectives shall be promoted through BSEC activities at various levels:

- To act in a spirit of friendship and good neighborliness and enhance mutual respect and confidence, dialogue and cooperation among the Member States;
- To further develop and diversify bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the basis of the principles and rules of international law;
- To act for improving the business environment and promoting individual and collective initiative of the enterprises and companies directly involved in the process of economic cooperation;
- To develop economic collaboration in a manner not contravening

the international obligations of the Member States, including those deriving from their membership to international organizations or institutions of an integrative or other nature, and not preventing the promotion of their relations with third parties;

- To take into account the specific economic conditions and interests of the Member States involved;
- To further encourage the participation of other interested states, international economic and financial institutions as well as enterprises and companies in the BSEC economic cooperation process.

1. CHAIRMANSHIP COMMUNICATION

The Chairmanship-in-Office will communicate the priorities, the areas of focus and the calendar of events of the Chairmanship and information regarding BSEC meetings, through the communication tools and means available both to itself and the BSEC PERMIS and/or the BSEC Related Bodies, in accordance with the general principles and objectives and the overall communication goals of the Organization.

The actions and steps to be taken during the term of the Chairmanship-in-Office will be decided in advance by the Member State which will hold the Chairmanship-in-Office, with the assistance of the BSEC PERMIS.

Also, the BSEC PERMIS will use its means of communication to further disseminate the official messages of the Chairmanship-in-Office.

2. MEMBER STATES COMMUNICATION

In order to enhance the visibility and reputation of BSEC as a regional economic cooperation organization, each Member State is responsible for the implementation of the BSEC Public Communication Strategy in its country, within the framework of the general principles and objectives and the overall communication goals of the Organization.

Each Member State appoints a Communication Officer, who is the contact point for the implementation of the BSEC Public Communication Strategy in that particular Member State. In implementing the Strategy, the Communication Officers will benefit from the direct assistance of the BSEC PERMIS Executive Manager in charge of Media and Public Relations.

The Communication Officer of the Member State which holds the Chairmanship-in-Office attends all meetings of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministerial Meetings organized during the term of the Chairmanship.

3. PERMIS COMMUNICATION

The BSEC PERMIS is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the BSEC Public Communication Strategy in the Member States and in relation with partners.

The BSEC PERMIS Executive Manager in charge of Media and Public Relations works in close cooperation with the Communication Officer of the Chairmanship-in-Office as well as the Communication Officers in the other Member States.

The Executive Manager prepares press releases issued by the BSEC PERMIS regarding BSEC meetings and events in cooperation and coordination with the relevant PERMIS staff members and disseminates the press releases following the approval of the First Deputy Secretary General and the Secretary General of the PERMIS.

The Executive Manager in charge of Media and Public Relations also organizes the press conferences held at the BSEC Headquarters on the occasion of major BSEC events and meetings, in coordination with the Communication Officer of the Member State holding the Chairmanship-in-Office.

The Executive Manager holds periodic meetings at the BSEC Headquarters with media representatives of the Host Country and foreign press members to inform them about previous, ongoing and future activities of the Organization.

The Executive Manager assists and coordinates with the Communication Officer of the Chairmanship-in-Office and/or the Communication Officer of the Member State where a BSEC meeting/event will take place in order to organize a briefing for media representatives who will cover the meeting/event.

The Executive Manager fosters contacts with think-tanks, universities and civil society organizations in the Member States to promote BSEC and provides them with materials and information regarding the activities of the Organization.

4. PROJECT COMMUNICATION

Upcoming, ongoing and implemented projects are of interest to the Organization's stakeholders. It is thus necessary to prepare and execute an effective communication plan for each large scale project. The communication plan for such projects shall be drafted by the competent Executive Manager and Project Coordinator of the BSEC PERMIS and approved by the competent Country-Coordinator and the Chairmanship-in-Office, within the framework of the general principles and objectives and the overall communication goals of the Organization.

The preparation of communication plans for individual projects shall focus on clear messages for each project, answering the following:

- What is the focus of the project?
- Why and how is BSEC involved in this particular project?
- What concrete benefits does the project bring to the region?
- What are the expected results and achievements of the project?
- Why is the project important?
- What will be done next in terms of actions?

IV. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Direct channels of communication are those that the Organization controls, such as meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops, project events and statements of the representatives of the Chairmanship-in-Office and the PERMIS.

Also a range of documents, publications, official symbols and promotional materials are available. They are conveyors of the Organization's messages. These include the joint declarations issued at the conclusion of Ministerial Meetings, press releases issued by the Chairmanship-in-Office and the BSEC PERMIS, *Black Sea News* which is the joint publication of the BSEC family of institutions as well as the BSEC logo and flag, Chairmanship logos and mottos, pamphlets, brochures, flyers, banners, posters, stickers, badges and similar materials.

The websites of BSEC and its Related Bodies, press conferences, Directorial interviews, participation in leadership debates, opinion and editorial commentaries, write-in campaigns to newspapers and phone-in campaigns to talk radio are also effective in conveying the Organization's messages.

V. THE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

In its communication, BSEC will focus on all stakeholders referred to in Section II. Communication can be channeled through various tools:

1) ELECTRONIC

Electronic media is not only the most cost-efficient and expedient way of communication, but it has also become the most widely used one in the past years. The availability and quality of online-content offers an organization the opportunity to improve and enhance its image vis-à-vis the outside world. BSEC will use, *inter alia*, the following modes of electronic communication and will continue to keep up with technological developments in this area:

Website: www.bsec-organization.org

- The website should be regularly monitored and updated for the attractiveness of its opening page, currency of its content, ease of navigation, search engine optimization and consistency with the strategic goals and positioning of BSEC.
- The following communication techniques should be integrated into the BSEC website, which may require the Server hosting the BSEC website to be upgraded:
 - RSS-Feed (to enable interested parties to subscribe and receive automatic notifications when new information and press releases are added to the website)
 - Movies and trailers about special projects and activities relevant to the public
- The possibility of combining the web pages of the BSEC PERMIS and the

BSEC Related Bodies under one common design, cross-referencing each other, while keeping the independence of each organization for the review and updating of its own section could be considered, which would reinforce the image of the whole of the BSEC family of institutions vis-à-vis the stakeholders and the general public.

Newsletter:

Electronic newsletters are a source of information where the interested reader can obtain more detailed information about ongoing activities and projects. Active distribution of information is essential for underlining the openness, transparency and efficiency of an organization. It also creates a bond between the readers and the organization.

Within this framework, the BSEC PERMIS will continue to mass mail the electronic version of the *Black Sea News* to be automatically distributed to all its stakeholders and interested subscribers from the general public.

The setup of an Opt-in/Opt-out mechanism and the continuous maintenance of a reader database would make the electronic distribution more effective.

Press Room:

- The BSEC website should have a Press Room to facilitate interested journalists in finding relevant information as well as photos and other visual materials in high definition for downloading. This will make it easy for journalists worldwide to access information and to incorporate it in their publications at any time.
- The Press Room should include press releases and Directorial speeches delivered on various occasions as well as general information about the Organization and its profile in brief.
- The Press Room could contain important information and developments also in the official languages of the Member States, in addition to English. For this, the Member State Communication Officer would transmit to the BSEC PERMIS Executive Manager in charge of Media and Public Relations the press release in local language for its uploading to the BSEC website, along with its English version.
- The Member States can use the information in the Press Room also for the preparation of their own press releases related to BSEC activities and events.

News:

The website will continue to maintain an area with electronic file formats of press items and other news related to BSEC.

E-mails:

Electronic mails have by large substituted letters for the rapid and informal exchange of information in communication. An e-mail represents an organization just as much as any printed letter with its content, style, set-up and layout and should therefore be treated as such.

- All e-mails leaving any BSEC PERMIS staff member should carry a signature with the BSEC logo and address under the full name and title of the sender.
- If the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office has adopted a special motto or slogan for the term of its Chairmanship, this should also be added to the e-mail signature in its original design and font.
- The subject line should be meaningful and identifiable, so that neither a spam-filter prevents it from reaching its addressee, nor the addressee mistakenly disregards it as spam mail.

Social Networks:

Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have become widely used platforms of communication. The amount of information shared on these networks is steadily growing, as is the influence they have on public opinion.

BSEC should make use of the possibilities these services offer in spreading its messages.

Electronic Guides:

There are various websites on the internet where general information about different topics, including regional organizations, is stored. Wikipedia, for example, is one of them.

These online guides, encyclopedia and information websites need to be scanned regularly in order to have the information on BSEC updated, where necessary. Such information should also include the actual work, activities and projects of the Organization.

2) PRINTED TOOLS

Printed communication media of BSEC comprises the BSEC brochure, the *Black Sea News* newsletter and BSEC stationeries. For budgetary reasons, the focus should lie on electronic communication.

3) VISUALS

The logo of the Organization is its main visual tool. It should therefore appear on all printed and electronic communication.

Photos and visuals which are for download from the BSEC website should be made available in both high and low resolution.

4) SPONSORING HIGH PROFILE EVENTS / PROJECTS

Providing sponsorship for high profile conferences, events and projects of regional and international scale, including social responsibility projects with social, cultural, environmental and similar causes and sports events, organized in the BSEC Member States, using the name and logo of BSEC, would give the Organization greater visibility among the general public. Every Member State which holds the Chairmanship-in-Office should try to observe a balance, taking into consideration its own identity and perception as the Chairmanship-in-Office, while preparing the calendar of events for its Chairmanship.

VI. MESSAGES

Each BSEC Subsidiary Organ is responsible to define its purposes and to develop key messages about its activities, achievements and actions which will be channeled in the appropriate manner.

In developing their key messages, each BSEC Subsidiary Organ should answer:

- What does this body focus on?
- Why is BSEC involved in this particular issue and how?
- Which concrete benefit do the activities of this body bring to the region?
- What are the next steps/actions to be taken?

These messages then need to be channelled effectively to the target audiences, which could appear also as:

By-lines - These typically contain a strategic message displaying a goal or vision of the organization itself. They are used for longer periods of time.

Slogans/
Mottos - These are project or focus oriented and are used for shorter periods of time. As such, they are useful for the Chairmanship communication.

VII. PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

Integrating the BSEC Public Communication Strategy into the everyday work of the Organization is the primary responsibility of the BSEC PERMIS, under the supervision of the Chairmanship-in-Office and in coordination with the Member States.

The Committee of Senior Officials shall supervise that the staff members of the BSEC PERMIS make sure that communication aspects are included appropriately from the beginning of all policy formulation.

The Chairmanship-in-Office takes the leading role in the planning of communication throughout the term of its Chairmanship based on the BSEC Public Communication Strategy, with the assistance of the BSEC PERMIS.

The Member States, with the assistance of the BSEC PERMIS Executive Manager in charge of Media and Public Relations, are responsible for the implementation of the BSEC Public Communication Strategy in their respective countries and the Communication Officers appointed by each Member State act as contact points for the implementation of the Strategy in their countries.

Within the BSEC Subsidiary Organs (Working Groups, Ad Hoc Working Groups, Groups of Experts and Steering Committees), the Country Coordinators are responsible for the communication of the projects and/or activities of the particular Subsidiary Organ with the assistance of the competent Executive Managers and the Executive Manager in charge of Media and Public Relations at the BSEC PERMIS, as well as the BSEC Communication Officers appointed by the Chairmanship-in-Office and the Member States.

The BSEC Public Communication Strategy shall be reviewed and, if necessary, modified every five years during the term of the first Chairmanship-in-Office of the year.

VIII. BUDGET

The expenditures for the activities related to the implementation of the BSEC Public Communication Strategy shall be covered by the BSEC annual budgets and the means and resources of the Member States, including the Chairmanship-in-Office. Within this framework, the annual budgets of BSEC may be increased to support the implementation of the Strategy.