

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
of the International Conference
“Professional Education and Economic Needs of the Black Sea Region”
(Chisinau, 24 April 2015)

The first International Conference on “Professional Education and Economic Needs of the Black Sea Region” was held in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, on 24 April 2015. The Conference was jointly organized by the BSEC PERMIS and the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova under the auspices of the Moldovan Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC.

More than 100 participants from relevant government authorities, academia, business circles, BSEC Related Bodies, international organizations, including UNESCO, International Road Transport Union, International Union of Railways and the Danube Commission, as well as the Chamber of Industry and Trade of the Republic of Moldova and other civil society organizations took part in the event. The Conference was inaugurated and co-chaired by the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Victor TVIRCUN and the Rector of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova Dr. Grigore BELOSTECINIC. A message from the UN Secretary General Ban KI-MOON was also delivered at the opening session. Dr. Gheorghe DUCA, President of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Octavian CALMIC, Vice-Minister of Economy of the Republic of Moldova as well as Mr. Umberto de PRETTO, Secretary General of the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also addressed the Conference during the opening session.

The main themes of the Conference were discussed in detail within four panels, addressing quality issues in formal education; education and the role of information and communication technologies; linking science and education with market demands; and key values and priorities of education in the 21st Century.

With the presentations and discussions which took place during the panel sessions, the Conference enabled the participants to identify the following main issues:

1. Quality issues in formal education

-The role of higher education as a major engine for economic development is well established, and this role will increase as further changes in technology, globalization and demographics impact the BSEC Region. To remain competitive in light of these changes, the region will need to improve productivity and adopt an innovative approach in all sectors of the economy. Quality in higher education is one of the instruments in achieving these goals.

-Higher education has historically included economic development as part of its core mission. The colleges and universities serving the region have allocated fiscal, physical, and human

resources and created entrepreneurship systems within the institutions to advance economic development.

-The critical challenge for the BSEC region is how best to strategically provide the workforce needed to strengthen economic development. Also, lack of qualified employees; inadequate level of salaries for the teaching staff; limited professional training opportunities to meet the needs in employment market; lack of long term education strategies focusing on future development; resource mobilization needs; and different definitions and diverse aspects of quality issues in professional and higher education are among the main challenges in the region.

2. Education and the role of information and communication technologies

-Information and Communication Technology (ICT) essentially changed the world and, in particular, education. Thanks to ICT, strong collaboration links among education institutions in different countries were established which brought together leading world scholars for solving important scientific problems.

-It is necessary to unify the efforts of all BSEC Member States in the field of education by making greater use of ICT. BSEC Member States with high standards in the field of education should share best practices with and help other Member States to develop their education strategies. In this context, it would be useful to organize exchange programs among the BSEC Member States in the field of education. The use of ICT and the Internet can improve distance learning where the leading teachers and scholars from renowned universities can deliver lectures for bachelors, masters and PhD students. Joint programs in education with the awarding of diplomas of leading universities can contribute to education development.

-Parallel to state education, today, private high schools and universities play an important role in the development of education, thanks to investments from business circles and increased ICT-based education collaborations with higher education institutions from developed countries. Within this framework, the experiences of leading developed countries in education should be taken into consideration.

-It is necessary to create a good legislative atmosphere in the BSEC region for the realization of important projects and investments in education.

3. Linking science and education with market demands

-There is a strong need for establishing a close cooperation between the decision makers, academic circles and the business community.

-The implications for businesses in preparing professionals to support economic needs is positive.

-The quality of employees should be harmonized in accordance with the European standards.

-Transforming knowledge into skills is what is required by the labour market in the Black Sea region.

-In this framework, BSEC Member States were called upon to initiate concrete projects in the field of the professional education.

4. Key values and priorities of education in the 21st century

- Education is one of the key factors in the model of sustainable development due to the impact it has on the quality of human resources.

-The quality of the workforce trained within the framework of the professional education is largely dependent on the key competencies formed within the framework of the general education.

-The role of the key competencies in the process of workforce training is demonstrated by the growing interest of employers in these skills during the staff selection process.

The Participants underlined the importance of the Conference for developing education in the BSEC region and supported the idea of organizing similar conferences regularly in the future, to continue the discussions and exchange of views and experiences among the public, private and academic stakeholders.

At the conclusion of the Conference, the participants requested the BSEC PERMIS to forward the present Summary and Conclusions to the Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the relevant sectorial Ministries of the BSEC Member States.