

News from the Black Sea

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)



PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (PERMIS)



Dear Readers of the *News from the Black Sea*,

In this latest edition of our bulletin we wish to share with you the most recent BSEC-related activities, starting with the priorities set forward by the Republic of Albania as the current Chairmanship-in-Office. Yet we also focus on issues like *marine pollution* and *climate change*, which BSEC PERMIS believes should be urgently and conjointly addressed.

On this, about 71% of the Earth's surface is covered by water yet humans suffocate marine ecosystems with litter, noise and carbon emissions; significant harm is caused by plastic waste: every year an increasing number of marine species swallow or are fatally entangled in plastic debris. Noise pollution is yet another severe threat; sea creatures rely on communication by sound to find food, mate, navigate and, simply, to survive! Carbon emissions substantially increase the negative impact of climate change.

All the above dramatically affect the survival of millions of people who make their living from the abundant, yet finite, resources of our oceans and seas.

The BSEC Organization does its utmost in addressing the consequences of climate change, in preserving the marine environment and in promoting the sustainable development of our region. In this bulletin you can read more about the various relevant projects that BSEC PERMIS is engaged in.

We wish you pleasant reading and hope that we can join hands in our common battle to preserve “Mother Nature” for this and the next generations.

Ambassador M.B. Christides
Secretary General

Headlines:

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- ***Launching the “Blueing the Black Sea” Program (BBSEA)***
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- ***International Transport Forum-OECD Annual Consultation with International Organizations***
- ***Consultations with the Permanent Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA***
- ***UNECE Inland Transport Committee***
- ***BSEC participates in the Adriatic Connectivity Forum on Transport***
- ***Task Force on Intermodal Transportation in the Black Sea Region***
- ***High-Level Meeting of the Secretaries General of the IRU, TRACECA, BSEC, Turkic Council and ECO***
- ***Ad Hoc Working Group on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea***



The Albanian Chairmanship-in-office gets underway

Covering the first semester of 2021, the Albanian Chairmanship-in-Office practically commenced with the “Coordination Meeting of the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials, BSEC Related Bodies and the BSEC PERMIS”, held online on 3 February 2021.

The Meeting was chaired by Mrs. Mimoza Halimi, Director General at the General Directory of Political and Strategic Issues of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania. She presented the priorities of the Chairmanship under the motto: “Coming together for a sustainable post COVID era”. Mrs. Halimi stressed that the overriding objective would be to “increase the range of influence and targeted effects of BSEC for its Member States by...the continued improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization”.

Mrs. Halimi outlined a number of Priorities in various sectors, like the revival of Tourism, the improvement of Transport and its Infrastructure, the effective fight against climate change, the support for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the further promotion of interaction between BSEC and the EU, in order to achieve better results in their common efforts to tackle the socio-economic pressure caused by the Covid Pandemic and more.

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES, conveyed the best wishes of the Secretariat for the successful realization of the priorities announced by the Albanian Chairmanship, reiterating that PERMIS will spare no effort to provide its full and unconditional support to that end.

The full text of the Albanian priorities is available on:

<http://www.bsec-organization.org/chairmanship>

Tackling Pollution and Developing the Blue Economy in the Black Sea



Launching the “Blueing the Black Sea” Program (BBSEA)

BSEC’s flagship “Blueing the Black Sea” Program (BBSEA) to tackle marine pollution and catalyze Blue Economy investments in the Black Sea region made a strong start on 4 February 2021 with the first in a series of online “national consultation” workshops focusing on Turkey.

This new regional initiative is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and supported by the World Bank. The launch session outlined the concept of the BBSEA to over one hundred interested stakeholders and demonstrated how it will underpin the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA), adopted in 2019 by the 6 littoral states of the Black Sea, Turkey, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia and Ukraine, plus Moldova.

The consultation workshop featured two working sessions: during the first the state of play on the current level of marine pollution in the Black Sea was outlined, as well as the sources, impacts and existing prevention efforts; during the second the focus was on the BBSEA Regional Project in Turkey. Participating experts offered their feedback on what could be the priorities of public authorities, private stakeholders and environmentalists, as the project’s currently planned activities roll out, in order to reduce the pollution in the Black Sea, one of the most toxic in the world. A number of excellent ideas were put forward on the development and sharing of sustainable business standards, how to attract “green” and innovative financing capacity, obtaining financial support for “green” and PPP investments, etc.

For more details on the BBSEA and how you can contribute:

<http://www.bsec-bsvkc.org/Forms/BlueingTheBlackSeaProject>

World-renowned photographer Karl Taylor is supporting BSEC's efforts to combat marine pollution in the Black Sea



BSEC is happy and thrilled to announce that the world-renowned photographer Karl Taylor is supporting its efforts to combat the extensive pollution in the Black Sea! The famed British photo-artist has graciously allowed the BSEC PERMIS to use two of his extremely powerful images, in order to better illustrate two important PERMIS initiatives which are launched this year. The projects are the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded “Blueing the Black Sea” (BBSEA) program promoted by the World Bank and the “Marine Litter in the Black Sea” project supported by a grant from the EU. Karl Taylor's compelling photographs remind in a shocking way of the catastrophic affects pollution will have on this, and coming, generations if nothing is done NOW to reduce plastics and other toxic waste clogging up the world's oceans and seas.

Mr. Taylor said: “Like other similar initiatives around the globe, I fully support the forthcoming projects that the BSEC Organization is initiating this year to combat pollution and the growing plastic litter problem in the Black Sea”.

Karl Taylor has produced a short video on the way he prepared the shooting of his two stunning images. Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7Jy4uso-Og>

Activities on Fighting Micro Plastics and Marine Litter in the Black Sea

Another project BSEC PERMIS elaborated with regard to combating pollution in the Black Sea is the “Pilot Activities on Fighting Micro Plastics and Marine Litter in the Black Sea”; all involved partners held their first meeting online on 25 February 2021.

Representatives from the Sariyer Municipality in Istanbul, the “Plastics-Europe” Association, the Turkish National Plastics Association PAGEV and from the BSEC Related Body ICBSS, exchanged views on the finalization of a road-map for the implementation of this multi-faceted project which includes:

1. A pilot-collection of old fishing nets and other plastic marine litter in the Municipality of Sariyer and their recycling into useful, daily-life items.
2. The creation of a “school kit” in the national languages of the BSEC Member States sharing the Black Sea coastline.
3. The organization of an Essay Competition on marine litter prevention, tailor-made for high school students in the participating States of the Black Sea region.
4. Preparing an appealing short video for awareness-raising purposes in all Black Sea littoral countries and organizing a final regional high-level event, in order to present the results of the action and encourage further projects, based on the experience of the pilot-initiative under item 1.

The above activities will be co-financed by a grant from the DG NEAR of the European Commission and a highly appreciated contribution from the US Consulate General in Istanbul. BSEC PERMIS will shoulder the coordination and proper implementation of this project, the full details of which can be found in:

<http://www.bsec-bsvkc.org/Forms/BlueingTheBlackSeaProject>



Photo credit: Karl Taylor

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Addresses Blue Economy Forum

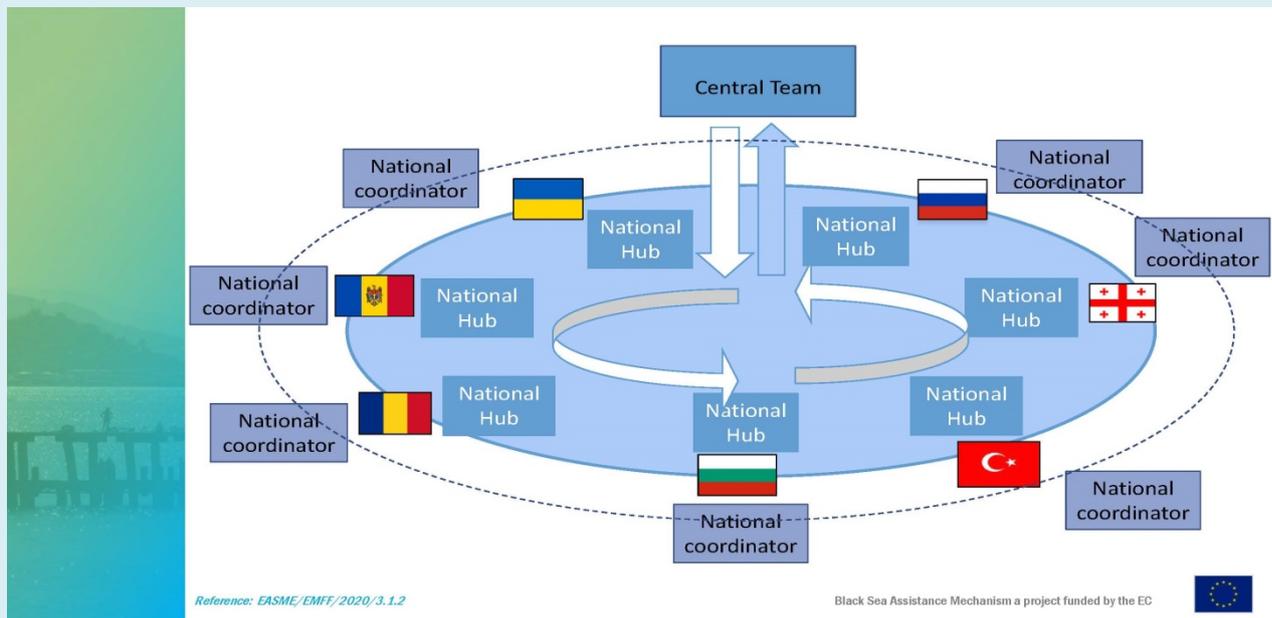


The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. Christides was invited to address the high-profile “*Blue Economy Forum: The Way to Green Recovery*” organized by the *Delphi Economic Forum* and the *Institute for Sustainable Development* of the EPLO (European Public Law Organization) on March 2, 2021. He used his address to introduce the audience of leaders and policy makers to the “*Blueing the Black Sea*” (BBSEA) program promoted by the World Bank and implemented by PERMIS.

He informed about the “National Consultation” workshops that are underway to help shape the design of the BBSEA project: “*Participation has been great and we expect that the result of these ongoing contacts will deliver valuable elements for the final design of the BBSEA project which, as you see, is actually formulated by the involvement of the stakeholders themselves. The whole procedure will help to identify and prepare the relevant investments that will eventually be carried out*” Ambassador Christides added.

Finally he also showed the online audience the powerful images of Karl Taylor (described above) which “*are worth a thousand words on the gravity of the pollution problem in the Black Sea*”, concluded the Secretary General.

National Hubs of the Black Sea Assistance Mechanism (BSAM) are launched



The Black Sea Assistance Mechanism, established by the European Commission in order to ensure support to the participating countries for the implementation of the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA), has set up National Hubs (NHs) in the Black Sea littoral states (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia - the Hub is still not operational, Georgia and Turkey, plus Moldova). The role of the NHs is to assist the work of the national CMA focal points in the implementation of the CMA's priorities. The jointly defined tasks of the NHs include among other:

- Continuously raise awareness and disseminate relevant information in the respective country and coastal regions about the CMA, its priorities and goals, the policy initiatives resulting from it, including the preparation of the new EU multiannual financial framework.
- Provide a "one-stop-shop" for advice and guidance to the national representatives and project promoters concerning: the formulation of projects in the context of the CMA, the systematic identification of funding-opportunities and of existing support resources available to project-promoters in the maritime domain, at the national and regional level.
- Establish partnerships and cooperation with existing networks/organizations/ clusters, active in the respective country and coastal regions in the thematic areas relevant for implementation of the action plan.
- Identify projects relevant for the CMA in the respective country and other coastal regions.
- Contribute to the preparation of events in the respective country and the annual stakeholder conference, if hosted in that country.

More detailed information can be found at: <https://blackseablueeconomy.eu/>

Second “National Consultation” on Blueing the Black Sea Program held for Georgia

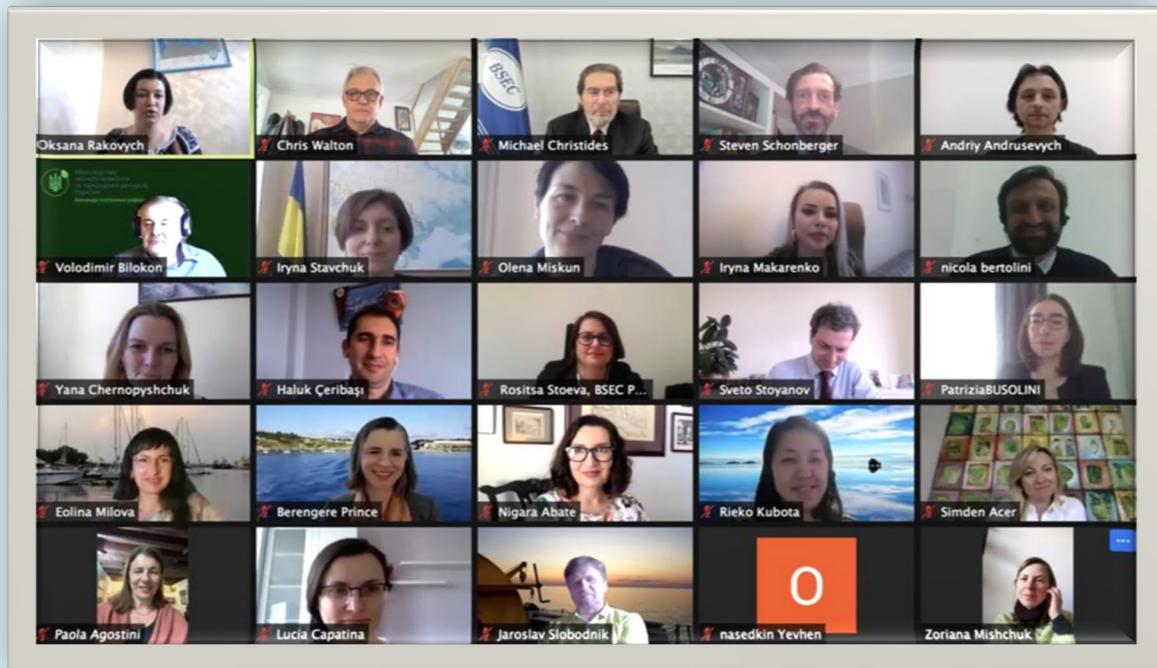
The second in the series of “National Consultation” sessions under the “Blueing the Black Sea” Program was held on 25 February 2021, this time focusing on Georgia. Two significant World Bank reports were presented during the session on (a) The Impact of Climate Change on Georgia’s Coastal Zone and (b) The Cost of Coastal Zone Degradation in Georgia. The workshop was highly interactive with the use of a system to survey and assess the input of participating experts and professionals on how the BBSEA Program could be implemented both in Georgia and in the wider Black Sea region, in order to effectively combat the latter’s acute pollution.

Steven Schonberger, World Bank Sustainable Development Regional Director, underlined the global significance of the BBSEA project, adding that *“any country tackling pollution alone cannot guarantee a desirable quality of the sea water in an enclosed eco-system, such as the Black Sea. Considering this common ecosystem, collaboration at the regional level is essential”*.

Speaking for the Government of Georgia, Ms. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, told the audience that *“the Black Sea is a very important resource for Georgia and our marine spaces are a huge priority”*



Third “Blueing the Black Sea” Program “National Consultation” Workshop for Ukraine



The third “National Consultation” workshop under the “Blueing the Black Sea” program was held on 11 March 2021, this time focusing on Ukraine. The event was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine and the Common Maritime Agenda Hub of Ukraine.

Using highly interactive tools in both working sessions, participating experts, academics and representatives of governmental organizations had the chance to express their views on Ukraine’s key pollution challenges, thus helping in the formulation of a diagnostic analysis concerning the sources, impacts and current prevention efforts, which could shape the BBSEA program locally. The event offered the opportunity to tap into the audience’s understanding on how the program should be implemented, including how it fits-in with other local projects against pollution, where available investment should be specifically directed and what are other possible sources of funding.

Speaking for the Government of Ukraine, Ms. Iryna Stavchuk, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, stressed the significance of the BBSEA project for Ukraine, adding that “research confirms it, the Black Sea is twice as polluted as the Mediterranean and 83% of that pollution is from plastics”.

Steven Schonberger of the World Bank added that, despite the seriousness of the problem, there are positive signs, as “the severe pollution in the Black Sea has happened only over the last 20 years, so this fact makes it reversible”.

“Blueing the Black Sea” Program “National Consultation” Workshop for Moldova

Moldova was the focus of BSEC PERMIS’s 4th “National Consultation” workshop under the flagship “Blueing the Black Sea” Program (BBSEA), on 22 March 2021. The online session, held jointly with the World Bank, the Moldovan Government and the Common Maritime Agenda National Hub of Moldova, introduced the BBSEA project to public authorities, policy makers, private organizations and financial institutions involved in combating marine and river pollution in Moldova and the Black Sea.

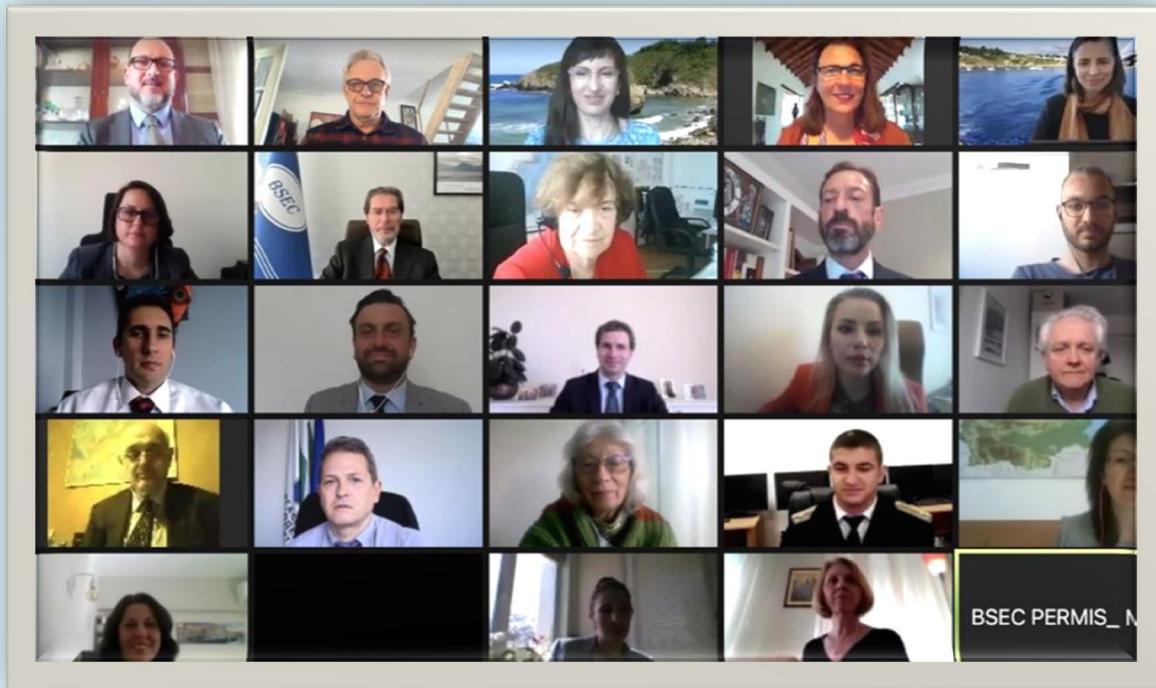
Although Moldova doesn’t have immediate access to the Black Sea, its river basins Prut and Nistru (Dniester) are direct tributaries to it; they have high concentrations of ammonium (NH₄) and phosphate caused by insufficiently treated domestic and industrial wastewater and by agricultural run-off.

As during the previous “National Consultation” events, participants were able to offer valuable ideas and proposals for the most effective implementation of the BBSEA project in Moldova.

On behalf of the Moldovan Government, Mr. Ion Perju, Minister of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment stressed that *“on the International World Water Day, the Republic of Moldova confirms our willingness to support initiatives like the BBSEA project, as well as the need for stronger regional cooperation. We face big challenges, yet the Black Sea can become an example to the world”*.



BBSEA Program seeks feedback in “National Consultation” Workshop for Bulgaria



Nearly 100 stakeholders participated in BSEC PERMIS’s 5th “National Consultation” workshop, on 29 March 2021, on the “Blueing the Black Sea” Program, this time focusing on Bulgaria. The event was held with the additional support of two Bulgarian Ministries, that of Environment and Water, Regional Development and Public Works and that for Transport, Information Technology and Communications.

As in the previous similar events, participants had the chance to contribute many ideas and suggestions concerning the implementation of the BBSEA program, in support also of the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) in Bulgaria and beyond.

During the Bulgarian “National Consultation” workshop the recent “*Policy Note: Toward Blue Economy Development in Bulgaria*” was presented, which was jointly developed by the World Bank and the Bulgarian Government. This report emphasizes the economic value of Bulgaria’s Blue Economy, which can potentially provide a sizable contribution to the country’s post-pandemic recovery. There was also an update on the *MARSPLAN-BS II* project, which supports the development of Bulgaria’s first ever maritime spatial plan in the Black Sea, ensuring its compatibility with that of neighboring Romania.



CONNECT  BLACK SEA

Happy Birthday Black Sea Connect!

“Black Sea Connect” is a key Horizon2020 coordination and support action (CSA), which scientifically, technically and logistically supports the broader Black Sea Blue Growth Initiative; it is supported by the European Commission and composed of country-appointed experts and stakeholders, among them from seven BSEC Member States; the BSEC PERMIS participates as a partner with its appointed Executive Manager. “Black Sea Connect” is one year young and BSEC PERMIS wishes to congratulate all partners and stakeholders that contributed to its successful launching. Details on its recent activities can be found here:

<http://connect2blacksea.org/>

OTHER NEWS



BSEC PERMIS unveils new travel website during meeting of the ad hoc Working Group on “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols”

As the coronavirus pandemic persists, the BSEC PERMIS, closely aligned with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), reaffirmed its commitment to continue guiding the interested BSEC Member States in shaping the travel and tourism sector’s response to the negative impact of Covid-19.

To that end, another coordination meeting of the above ad hoc Working Group was hosted online on March 5, 2021. Participants discussed strategies and mechanisms to support industry stakeholders and exchanged views on a possible package of measures to accelerate the gradual recovery of tourist flows in the BSEC region. They also worked on the draft of a Joint Statement to be endorsed by the Ministers responsible for Tourism, in which the main objectives of their above endeavor are outlined.

PERMIS also presented its new website, a new online platform that hosts the latest regulations and measures adopted by BSEC Member States in the context of the current emergency. Designed as a “one-stop-shop”, www.bsec-covidinfo.org it provides updates and current prerequisites on travel & tourism uploaded by the BSEC Member States themselves, as well as other information from the Black Sea region and beyond, covering the latest developments in this field.

Participants also exchanged views on the possibilities to support the “Black Sea Tourism Activator 2021”, a new initiative that PERMIS has put forward in order to select in all 13 Member States and award the most innovative solutions and ideas of start-ups that could help the tourism sector recover faster.



BSEC PERMIS Dep. Secretary General, Ambassador Traian Chebeleu, took part online in the above Forum, held in a hybrid format in Geneva, on 17-18 March 2021. The theme for this year's event was "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and action and delivery on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region".

Ambassador Chebeleu outlined in his intervention the BSEC activities to coordinate regional efforts for mitigating the pandemic's impact in key sectors such as travel and tourism, transport and healthcare.

He further underlined the essential role BSEC can play in supporting its Member States to create the necessary policy framework and harmonize their action for sustainable economic development and for achieving the UN SDGs.

Many other participants shared experiences and expressed views regarding key actions and accelerators to tackle the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and to promote a sustainable recovery.



Using Science to support the Implementation of SDGs in the Black Sea Region

Ambassador Traian Chebeleu, PERMIS Dep. Secretary General, attended the International Conference on “Science Evidence-Based Decision Making Approaches for the Implementation of SDGs in the Black Sea Region”, organized online on 24 March 2021 by the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN).

Representatives from governmental institutions, parliaments, universities, NGOs and other entities engaged in the implementation of the SDGs exchanged views on similar experiences and best practices. Salient points that emerged from the meeting were: Romania intends to establish a Centre of Excellence on SDGs, while Ukraine has a “world data center” collecting data from all BSEC Member States regarding the implementation of SDGs.

Ambassador Chebeleu underlined in his intervention that, in order to achieve the satisfactory implementation of the SDGs, regional cooperation is imperative, not only because the SDGs do not distinguish state borders, but also because the negative impact of their absence in one country certainly affects the situation in the neighboring states. He concluded by adding that the active involvement of the Black Sea Universities Network together with that of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network hosted by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki – “SDSN Black Sea”, could mobilize the necessary regional scientific and technological expertise, setting an enviable example.

The importance of statistics and data in the Covid-19 era – Working Group Meeting



The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on the Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information was held online on 26 March 2021, with the participation of experts from the respective Authorities of BSEC Member States.

The meeting was chaired by the President of the National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria and participants focused on possible ways and means of revitalizing the exchange of comparable and reliable data between the BSEC Member States and on how to reactivate the BSEC Coordination Centre for the Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information.

Participants highlighted that with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all BSEC Member States, the role of statistics has become even more crucial because it could help in building swift resilience and generating sustainable development; they also agreed to establish a set of common indicators to monitor the social and economic developments of the region, which will be forwarded to the above BSEC Coordination Centre.

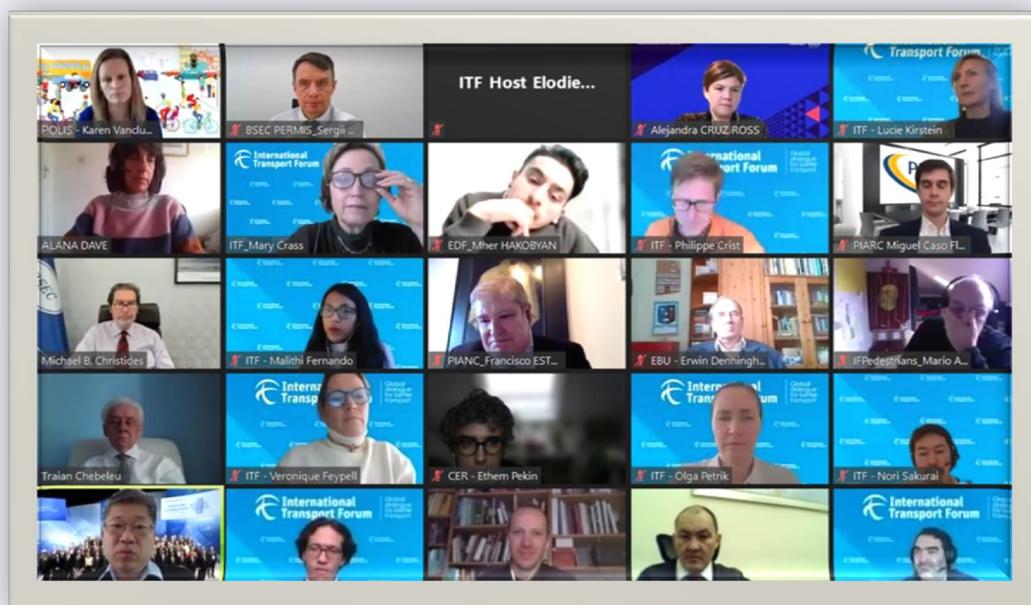
TRANSPORT

International Transport Forum-OECD Annual Consultation with International Organizations

The BSEC PERMIS participated at the “2021 ITF-OECD Consultation with International Organizations”, held online on 10 February 2021, in order to decide on the most pertinent issues that could be addressed during the 2021 ITF Summit on “Transport Innovation for Sustainable Development: Reshaping Mobility in the Wake of Covid-19” (26-28 May 2021, Leipzig, Germany).

BSEC PERMIS has actively participated in the recent annual ITF Summit and Expo events with a stand of its own as well as by organizing various side events.

During his intervention the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B. Christides, underlined that the BSEC highly values its thriving collaboration with the ITF and informed participants on the organization’s activities and initiatives aimed at mitigating the negative impact of Covid-19; he concluded by stressing that PERMIS will continue to focus on introducing innovative digitalization, facilitating border crossing procedures, on the use of clean energy and on maintaining the necessary compatibility of BSEC road-transport projects with those of the broader continental networks, like the TEN-T and TRACECA.



Consultations with the Permanent Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA



Upon the BSEC PERMIS initiative consultations were held on 19 February 2021 between the Secretaries General of the latter and of the *Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA*, in order to further coordinate efforts between the two Secretariats within the *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*, signed by the two sides in 2007.

The parties exchanged information regarding their respective activities, priorities and plans for the immediate future, focusing mainly on issues related to the digitalization of transport documents (e-Permit, e-TIR, e-CMR, e-Visa for professional drivers), on the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, on border-crossing facilitation and on other subjects of mutual interest.

Ambassador Christides and Mr. Assavbayev agreed on the preparation of a relevant Roadmap, in order to delineate the parameters for the concrete continuation of cooperation between the two Secretariats in the vital sector of transport.



The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador M. B. Christides followed the 83rd Session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC), focused on the weaknesses exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which have severely disrupted the supply chains of the inland transport systems.

Two panel discussions with prominent speakers and contributors were featured, highlighting the importance of international agreements and conventions.

The event concluded with the endorsement of the Ministerial Resolution on “Enhancing resilient inland transport connectivity in emergency situations: an urgent call for concerted action” by participating Ministers, Dep. Ministers and Heads of Delegations of Contracting Parties to the UN Transport Conventions under the umbrella of the ITC. Among the first to express their endorsement to the above Resolution were five BSEC Member States.



BSEC participates in the Adriatic Connectivity Forum on Transport

BSEC PERMIS representatives led by Ambassador Traian Chebelev, Dep. Secretary General, took part online in the high-profile Adriatic Connectivity Forum (17-18 February 2021) which aimed at promoting an integrated approach between (a) the Connectivity Agenda in the Adriatic & Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the Trans-European Corridors and (b) the Connectivity Agenda in the Western Balkans.

Ambassador Chebelev informed participants on BSEC's activities and achievements in the key sector of transport aiming to support trade and cooperation in the Black Sea Region; among other he mentioned the Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway, the Development of the "Motorways of the Sea" in the BSEC Region, the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region and the BSEC Permit System, all aimed at improving trans-European networks and the development of Euro-Asian transport links.

Task Force on Intermodal Transportation in the Black Sea Region

The Meeting, held on 17 March 2021, brought online together more than 40 experts from the respective Authorities of BSEC Member States and of many international organizations such as the *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)*, the *International Transport Forum (ITF)*, the *International Road Transport Union (IRU)*, the *Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA)*, the *Conference of European Directors of Roads (CEDR)*, the *International Union of Railways (UIC)*, the *Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA*, the *Transport Community (TCT)*, the *Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)* and the *Black Sea Assistance Mechanism (BSAM)* for the Common Maritime Agenda.

Participants presented recent developments in intermodal transport and logistics, new government policies and business measures affecting intermodal transport, discussed practical ways on the introduction of advanced technologies responding to the needs of the BSEC region, and exchanged views on addressing the negative impact of the pandemic on intermodal transportation. They agreed to continue reviewing the trends and performance of the intermodal transport sector and of the logistics industry in the BSEC region.

High-Level Meeting of the Secretaries General of the IRU, TRACECA, BSEC, Turkic Council and ECO



On 15 March 2021 Ambassador M. B. Christides participated in a *Meeting of the Secretaries General of the following international organizations: the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA (PS IGC TRACECA), the BSEC PERMIS, the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)*. This online event was initiated by the IRU Secretary General, Mr. Umberto de Pretto, with the aim to address the pressing issues related to the negative impact of Covid-19 on the road transport sector.

Participants took stock of the consequences of the pandemic on a global and regional level, exchanged information on the status of implementation of recovery measures promoted by governments and discussed on the possibilities of formulating a joint action plan, which will be brought to the attention at the highest governmental level in the respective regions.

During his intervention Ambassador Christides underlined that since the beginning of the pandemic the BSEC PERMIS has covered considerable ground by actively coordinating efforts with its transport partner organizations, first of all, with IRU and BSEC-URTA and, especially, by informing the respective national authorities of Member States about recent developments, underlining the importance of transport connectivity in the region. Ambassador Christides agreed with other participants to consult again with BSEC Member States on the possibility of creating a network of designated focal points in order to enhance coordination among the participating international entities.

Finally, the Secretaries General endorsed a *Joint Statement*, which included an urgent call to governments to apply meaningful actions that will allow the road transport industry to drive the economic post-pandemic recovery.

Ad Hoc Working Group on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea



During the Meeting held on 24 March 2021, BSEC PERMIS informed on its efforts to explore possible ways and means of potentially revitalizing the BSEC “Motorways of the Sea” project, by coordinating with similar efforts promoted by the European Commission also in the Black Sea region.

Experts from the respective authorities responsible for Transport from BSEC Member States participated in the online meeting, together with those from the *European Commission*, the *Danube Commission* and the *Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)*.

Prof. Kurt Bodewig, European Coordinator, provided a comprehensive review of the EU-promoted concept of the MoS. Special attention was paid to the *Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) for the Motorways of the Sea* which sets the priorities for the creation of a sustainable, smart and seamless *European Maritime Space*, with a particular focus within the Black Sea on growing traffic, modernization of existing facilities and optimal use of rail and barges, etc.

Answering questions from the representatives of BSEC States, Professor Bodewig elaborated on the possibilities of funding concrete infrastructure projects, even in non-EU countries, and on the significance of the wider Black Sea region as the “bridge” between Europe and Asia.

The Ad Hoc Working Group welcomed the PERMIS’ initiatives aimed at revitalizing the BSEC MoS project and requested the parties to the relevant BSEC MOU to steer the next phase of their work in the preparation of the necessary “Master Plan”.

Dear Readers,

We hope you enjoyed this Newsletter. There will be more details of BSEC's activities in the next issue.



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