

News from the Black Sea

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)



PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (PERMIS)



Dear Readers,

This edition of the BSEC Newsletter (Issue No.32) covers a longer period since we wanted to do some adjustments in the publication details. We will therefore brief you on the BSEC activities held between August to December 2025.

As you already know, the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC in the second semester of 2025 was held by the Republic of Bulgaria. All throughout this period our activity continued to be an intensive one, with many events organized in the areas of cooperation covered by BSEC or related thereto. I personally, as well as members of my team in BSEC PERMIS participated in several important regional/international conferences and panels, where beside contributing to the deliberations therein, opportunities were explored and discussed for possible cooperation and partnerships in fields of common interest.

In October, we commemorated a landmark moment for the Black Sea: the 29th Anniversary of the “Black Sea Action Day” and the signing of the “Black Sea Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea”. We believe in the need of collective and continuous efforts at both regional, national, and community levels to stop the pollution of the Black Sea, as well as for enhanced regional cooperation for its protection.

Also, in the month of October, the financial/business pillar of BSEC, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) located in Thessaloniki, moved to its new Headquarters. We wish them all the best in their new building.

Dear Readers,

We completed this busy and successful period under the Bulgarian Chairmanship with the Fifty-first Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) of BSEC during which several important decisions were taken.

We look forward with confidence and ready to continue on the same path under the Chairmanship of Georgia which started on 1 January and will guide us until 30 June 2026. You may find more information in this Newsletter and on the BSEC website.

Dear readers,

I would conclude by reiterating our hope for the ongoing war in Ukraine to end and for the so much need peace in our region to be brought back to the benefit of us all. A happy year 2026 and stay tuned with us via BSEC website and social media accounts!

***Ambassador Lazar Comanescu
Secretary General***

HEADLINES

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

51st CMFA



The Fifty-first Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) of the BSEC Member States was held online on 19 December 2025.

The Council approved the granting and/or renewal of some Observer and Sectoral Dialogue Partners. The list is available on: <https://www.bsec-organization.org/partners>

The Council also approved the BSEC budget for year 2026 as well as other decisions related to the internal functioning of the Organization.

Meeting was concluded with the transfer of the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC from the Republic of Bulgaria to Georgia for the period of 1 January – 30 June 2026.

WORKING VISITS



BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Lazar Comanescu received H.E. Mr. Oleg Serebrian, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to the Republic of Türkiye at the BSEC Headquarters on 2 December 2025. Ambassador Serebrian presented his letter of accreditation as Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Ambassador Comanescu conveyed to Ambassador Serebrian his heartfelt wishes of full success in carrying out his mandate. Ambassador Serebrian, in his turn, highlighted the importance the Republic of Moldova attaches to BSEC and to continuing to actively contribute to the fulfilment of its objectives.

BSEC WORKING GROUPS/STEERING COMMITTEES

During the period covered by this Newsletter, BSEC PERMIS also held a number of Working Group and Steering Committee meetings covering such areas as Agriculture, Education, Energy, Environment, Budgetary and Financial Issues, Culture, Customs, ITC, Tourism, Transport, Organizational and Legal Matters, and Project Development Fund.

KEY EVENTS

Annual Meeting of BRAF and the Workshop on Hate Speech and Freedom of Information



First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı and Executive Manager Mr. Alexei Nistean participated in the 12th Annual Meeting of BRAF and the Workshop on Hate Speech and Freedom of Information held in Vlora (Albania) on 16-18 September 2025. The participants attending both events discussed challenges posed by hate statements on audio and visual media and the responses from the national regulatory authorities to ensure the freedom of information while safeguarding the audience from excessive hatred content.

Ambassador Dr. Kavakcı gave a brief overview of the activities of BSEC and highlighted the role of BRAF in promoting the objectives of BSEC Organization.

General Assembly (GA) of the BRIDGE-BS



The 4th General Assembly (GA) of the BRIDGE-BS project was held in Erdemli, Mersin on 1–2 October 2025. The two-day event brought together scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders to review results, strengthen exploitation pathways, and define the project’s long-term legacy. BSEC PERMIS was represented by Executive Manager in charge of Project Management Ambassador Georgi Panayotov, and the Project team members.

The General Assembly focused on the state of the Black Sea at both the basin and local pilot site levels. Discussions explored connections to European initiatives such as EDITO, EMODnet, and Copernicus. For more information please visit: <https://bridgeblacksea.org/>

Meeting of BSEC-PABSEC-CPMR-BBSC Representatives

A meeting, hosted by BSEC PERMIS was held with the representatives of BSEC, PABSEC and Balkan Black Sea Commission – CPMR in the BSEC Headquarters on 6 October 2025. The meeting aimed at exchanging views on the agenda and program of a High-level Conference initiated by the BBSC-CPMR to take place in spring 2026 in Patras, Greece, as well as enhancing cooperation at regional and local level in the wider Balkan and Black Sea Area.



BSEC-URTA General Assembly



The 46th Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly was held in Cappadocia, Türkiye, on 9 October 2025. The agenda of the Assembly included, among others, the review of the BSEC-URTA activities since its previous Meeting (16 May 2025), the approval of the Minutes thereof, as well as the report of BSEC-URTA Management Council that preceded the General Assembly.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the General Assembly, and addressing it, expressed his appreciation for cooperation between BSEC and BSEC-URTA, particularly its focus on finding appropriate answers to the challenges road transport faces. He emphasized in this context,

on the relevance of concrete joint projects, like the BSEC Permit System as well as the need of further resolute steps aimed at the facilitation of border crossings in the region, with special attention to visa issuance for professional drivers, nationals of BSEC Member States.



BSTDB Headquarters Opening Ceremony

Upon invitation by the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the opening ceremony of the new BSTDB Headquarters in Thessaloniki on 20 October 2025.

Addressing the participants in the ceremony, Ambassador Comanescu highlighted the key role of the Bank in furthering economic development in the Black Sea area and the close cooperation between BSEC PERMIS and BSTDB aimed at promoting the objectives of the BSEC Organization.

Tbilisi Silk Road Forum



The 5th Edition of the Tbilisi Silk Road Forum took place in Tbilisi on 22-23 October 2025 under the theme “Invest in Connectivity – Grow in Stability”. It consisted of several thematic panels with high profile speakers.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as panelist in the Forum. In his remarks within the Panel on “Energy Crossroads - Choices for a Secure Future”, he highlighted the role and contribution of BSEC Organization towards common approaches with the view to increase the energy security, interconnectivity and further diversification of energy resources and routes.

Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes

The 14th Annual Advisory Forum on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe took place in Cappadocia, Türkiye, on 22-24 October 2025. The Forum focused on the theme “Cultural Routes and Landscapes: Advancing Heritage Protection through Cultural and Sustainable Tourism” and underscored the crucial role of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in safeguarding cultural heritage through sustainable tourism practices.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the panel “Beyond the Destination: Reimagining Cultural Tourism through Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”. In his remarks he highlighted the ongoing efforts of BSEC PERMIS to foster cooperation in the fields of culture and tourism and to support the development of cross-border cultural initiatives that reflect the Black Sea region’s richness and diversity. He further emphasized the importance of dialogue, cultural exchange, and regional cooperation.



International Black Sea Action Day

An online Conference was held by TUDAV on 31 October 2025 to mark the 29th Anniversary of the signing of the “Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea”, which laid the foundation for approaching three decades of coordinated action under the Bucharest Convention.

Three panels, covering presentations and discussions on “Resilient Black Sea and Shared Futures”, “Regional Projects to Combat Marine Pollution and Preserve the Black Sea”, and “Sustainable Blue Economy for the Black Sea” took place during the event. BSEC PERMIS was represented by Executive Manager Ambassador Georgi Panayotov who did a keynote presentation on “Black Sea in a changing climate”.

UN Tourism General Assembly



The 26th UN Tourism General Assembly, was held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 7 to 11 November 2025, under the theme “AI-Powered Tourism: Redefining the Future”. It coincided with the 50th anniversary of UN Tourism. The agenda included elections for the next UN Tourism Secretary General, thematic discussions on artificial intelligence and sustainability, as well as meetings of the Executive Council and specialized committees. The Riyadh Declaration on the Future of Tourism was also adopted during the General Assembly.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu who attended the Plenary of Affiliate Members, focused on the cooperation between BSEC and UN Tourism, and highlighted BSEC’s priorities, including the development of cross-border cultural and heritage routes, the promotion of gastronomy and wine tourism programs, and the fostering of knowledge-sharing platforms for capacity-building, youth engagement, and academic exchanges.

PABSEC General Assembly



The 66th General Assembly of PABSEC was held in Sofia on 23-25 November 2025. Besides reviewing PABSEC's activities in the current semester, the General Assembly's agenda included two thematic items: Cooperation with the EU and other international organizations, respectively AI for sustainable development.

In his statement in the Plenary Session, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu informed the audience on the activities of BSEC Organization since the last General Assembly held in Baku in June 2025, stressed the need of continued efforts by BSEC and BSEC Related Bodies aimed at coping with the challenges the BSEC region is confronted with, and expressed his appreciation for the fruitful cooperation between BSEC PERMIS and PABSEC.

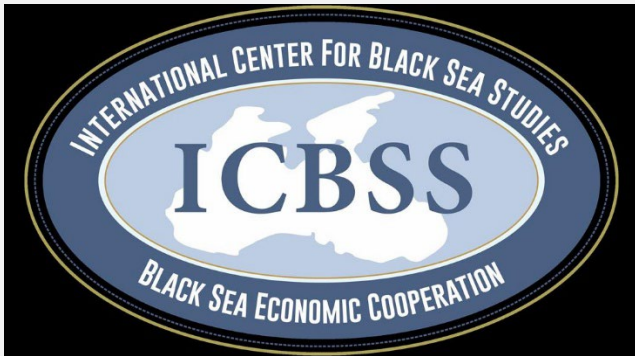
CEI Ministerial Meeting



The Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) took place in Belgrade on 26 November 2025. The generic topic of the Meeting was "Empowering the CEI Region through Connectivity, Innovation and Integration". A Joint Statement on enhancing regional cooperation with focus on connectivity, innovation, and European integration was adopted.

Addressing the meeting, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu emphasized on the importance of cooperation, innovation, and interconnectedness. He referred in this context, to BSEC's efforts on this score, highlighting that the strong partnership in this endeavor with the CEI has proven over time to be mutually beneficial and complementary. He also said that improved transport links, digital infrastructure, and energy interconnections are essential to promoting cooperation and getting tangible results.

International Black Sea Symposium



The 14th International Black Sea Symposium organized by the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) was held online on

2 December 2025. The generic topic of the Symposium was “Black Sea: Approaching a tipping point?” with the deliberations in three successive panels.

In his contribution to the debate in the introductory panel, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Lazar Comanescu focused on the need of cooperation and better correlation among the regional and international actors present in the Black Sea region. He also referred to the importance of duly taking into account and building upon initiatives and projects coming out from the region itself.

RCC Meeting

The 19th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations was held in Sarajevo on 3-4 December 2025, hosted by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The generic topic of the meeting was “Smart, Sustainable and Resilient Connectivity among the Regions”. The participants had thorough exchange of views and informed each other on their Organizations’ priorities and developments in the area of connectivity, in particular the transport infrastructure and connectivity in energy.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu dwelled on the importance of connectivity as the backbone of economic

development, prosperity, and social stability in the region, and its relevance for sustainable and environmentally friendly development.



PDF Kick-off Meeting of Partners



The Kick-off Meeting of the Partners of the Project Development Fund (PDF) “Project Blue Port Index for BSEC Countries” took place in Bursa on 8 December 2025. The Project aims to increase the contribution of ports to the blue economy and promote sustainable maritime practices with Blue Port Index (BPI), as well as to establish a scientific basis for the comparative evaluation of the ports of BSEC countries. The partners of the Project are Bursa Technical University (Lead Partner - Türkiye), Burgas Free University (Bulgaria), and Batumi Tourism Institute (Georgia).

BSEC PERMIS First Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı briefed the participants on the importance of the BSEC Project Development Fund as well as its activities since its inception in 2004. She underlined the importance of such projects as the “Project Blue Port Index for BSEC Countries” that serve the conservation of the planet and reiterated BSEC’s readiness to welcome collaborative efforts from prospective partners.

OTHER EVENTS

Korea-BSEC ICT Cooperation Program

The 14th Korea-BSEC ICT Cooperation program took place in Seoul on 15-19 September 2025, where participants shared experience and expertise, as well as their national institutions' experience in digital government, exploring opportunities for cooperation in this field.

TOURAL General Assembly

The 3rd TOURAL General Assembly meeting held in Zadar, Croatia on 18-19 September 2025 brought together partners from across Europe to review progress, align on project objectives, and reinforce collaboration across work packages. The program also included a study visit to the International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar for a presentation on best practices in heritage protection and management.

More detailed information related to the project activities can be found on the following link: <https://toural-project.eu/>



Specialized Training Course on Economic Diplomacy



A Specialized Training Course on Economic Diplomacy was organized in Sofia on 23 September 2025 by the Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute (BDI).

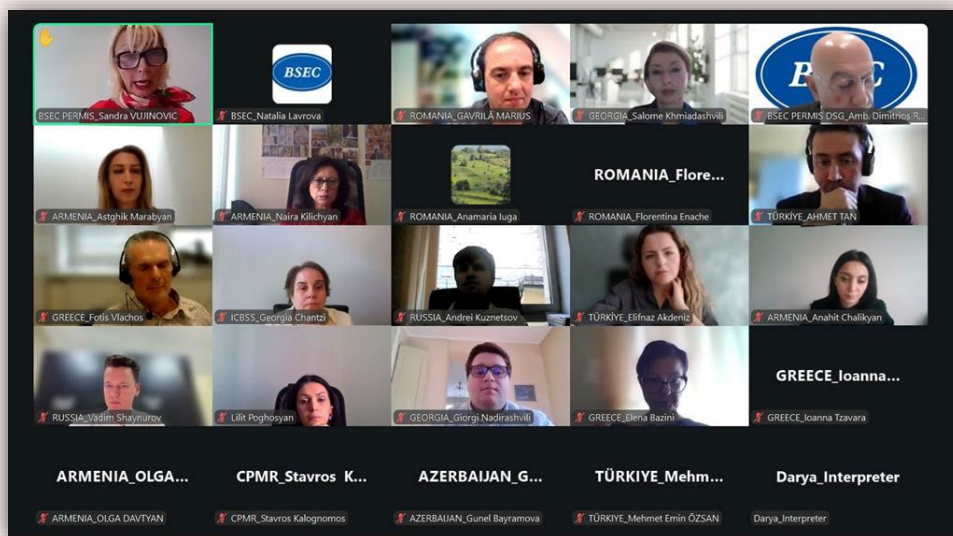
Invited as keynote speaker in the opening session, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu highlighted the particular importance of the economic dimension of diplomacy and elaborated in this context on the role of BSEC in supporting economic cooperation in the wider Black Sea area. He also emphasized on the key role of economic cooperation in providing and strengthening long term security.

Green Energy Investments Forum

The 12th Green Energy Investments Forum was held in Athens under the auspices of BSEC on 8 October 2025.

In his address, BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis touched upon the particular importance BSEC attaches to encouraging Green Energy investments in the BSEC Region and underlined that, investments in this respect are crucial for the modernization of the energy sector to achieve the UN SDG 7 Goal, the economic growth, job creation and increasing energy security.

Workshop on Cultural Heritage



BSEC PERMIS held an online Workshop on Legislative Frameworks, Inventorying and Transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage on 14 October 2025. The event was organized under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, in its capacity as Country-Coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on Culture.

Presentations were made on national legislative frameworks, inventorying systems, and transmission mechanisms for intangible cultural heritage, with a particular focus on community participation, youth engagement, and innovation. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to promoting closer collaboration and to developing joint projects under the framework of the BSEC Working Group on Culture.

EfxINNOs Joint Workshop



BSEC PERMIS hosted on 17 October 2025, the 2nd EfxINNOs Joint Workshop “Innovative Marine Monitoring Technologies for a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Black Sea,” organized by Istanbul University. The discussions focused on data-driven marine monitoring, promoting data for decisions, and aligning with regional frameworks such as the Bucharest Convention (BSIMAP), the Common Maritime Agenda, and SRIA.

BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Mr. Dimitrios Rallis highlighted the project’s alignment with BSEC priorities for cleaner seas and sustainable growth, reaffirming BSEC’s support for regional cooperation.

More information regarding the project can be found on: <https://envrio.eu/efxinno/>

Workshop on Research and Innovation

The Regional Workshop on “Stimulating and Promoting Research and Innovation Careers Among Youth in BSEC Countries” was held online on 27 October 2025. The Workshop brought together researchers, policymakers, and innovation stakeholders from across the BSEC Member States to exchange experiences, share best practices, and discuss ways to better inspire and support young people in pursuing careers in research and innovation.

In her address, BSEC PERMIS First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Merve Safa Kavakcı underlined the importance of promoting youth participation in science, technology, and innovation as a key driver of progress and sustainability in the region.

The Workshop concluded with a shared commitment to develop joint regional initiatives, strengthen cross-border cooperation, and continue dialogue through BSEC PERMIS, ensuring that the Black Sea region remains a vibrant hub for young scientists, innovators, and future leaders.



Conference "Sagarmanthan: The Great Ocean Dialogue

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as speaker in the second edition of "Sagarmanthan: The Great Ocean Dialogue" organized in Mumbai on 27-29 October 2025. The generic topic of the conference was maritime connectivity, with debates carried out in several thematic panels such as developments in the area of transport, climate change and maritime decarbonization, initiatives and transport routes, financing of trade and connectivity projects, etc.

In his contribution in the panel titled "Navigating Uncertainty: Collaborating for Maritime Resilience", Ambassador Comanescu

highlighted the relevance of the Black Sea region as a key connectivity hub and elaborated on BSEC's activities and projects in this area.



International Transport Forum

The 4th International Transport Forum (ITF) Regional High-Level Dialogue for Asia, dedicated to “Building Resilient and Seamless Freight Connectivity across Asia and Europe: Strengthening Corridors for Sustainable and Reliable Supply Chains” took place in Tashkent on 11 November 2025.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu took part as speaker in the Ministerial Round Table of the Forum where aspects related to “Investment and Development of Transport Infrastructure as a Key Factor in Strengthening Interregional Economic Connectivity” were discussed. In his contribution to the debate, Ambassador Comanescu elaborated on the BSEC activities aimed at promoting investments and strengthening the cooperation in this field as a top priority of the Organization. He referred in this context, to some BSEC initiatives and projects, as well as to the importance and need of a better correlation between the international/regional organizations active in the area of connectivity, emphasizing on the security of connectivity and transport routes.



Global Strategy Conference 2025



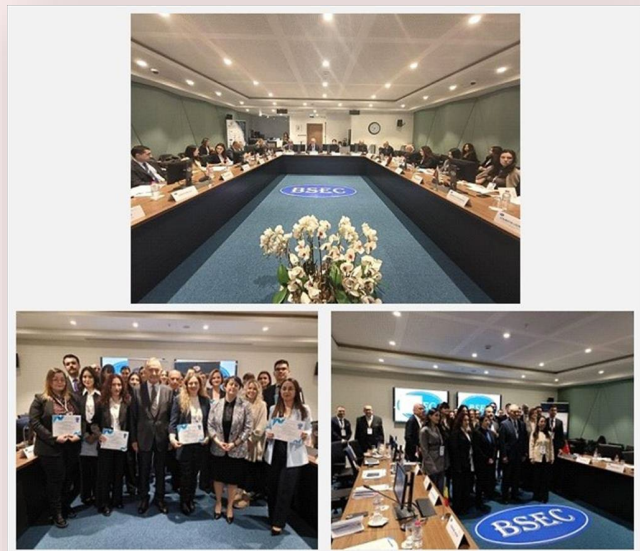
The Global Strategy Conference 2025 was held in Istanbul on 20-21 November 2025.

The generic theme of the Conference was “Regionalization in the International System: The Search for Stability in a Fragmenting World”.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu addressed the Opening Session, and informed the participants on the BSEC Organization’s activities and contributions to the stability, sustainability and development of the wider Black Sea region. He highlighted the importance of economic cooperation and interdependence in the region for the sake of balancing and keeping sustainable peace.

Workshop for Young Diplomats

The 8th BSEC Workshop for Young Diplomats was held at the BSEC Headquarters in Istanbul on 10–12 December 2025. The main topic of the event was “Building Tomorrow: Project Implementation for Sustainable Growth in the BSEC Region.” The program included presentations and interactive exchange among participants highlighting the Workshop’s aim to equip the next generation of diplomats with the skills and understanding needed to contribute effectively to regional cooperation and sustainable growth across the Black Sea region.





BSEC PERMIS continued its tradition to brief students from all over the world on BSEC activities. This time, a group of students from the Political Academy Club of Istanbul University visited the BSEC Headquarters on 1 December 2025. The students were briefed on the mission of the BSEC Organization, its activities and priorities of cooperation, as well as on the geo-strategic relevance of the Black Sea region. The importance of the new BSEC Economic Agenda was also highlighted in this context. The second part of the meeting consisted of a lively Q&A session.



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