



ORGANIZATION OF THE
BLACK SEA ECONOMIC
COOPERATION

News

from the Black Sea

April – June 2026

Issue No: 34



Dear Readers,

We are pleased to welcome you to this latest edition of our Newsletter providing information on BSEC activities in the period of April to June 2026.

To start with, we celebrated on 25 June BSEC Organization's anniversary - thirty-four years of work dedicated to fostering regional cooperation, economic growth, and peace across the Black Sea region. In its more than three decades of existence since its establishment in 1992, BSEC has been intensively working toward boosting intra-regional trade, expanding connectivity infrastructures, particularly transport and energy, facilitation and harmonization of customs legislations and border-crossing procedures, development of SMEs, promotion of cultural exchange, cooperation in tourism, as well as science and technology.

We also celebrated the World Environment Day, a reminder of the need to accelerate regional actions to face climate change challenges, and last but not least, the World Ocean Day as an aide-mémoire to protect the marine ecosystem and biodiversity of the Black Sea and beyond.

Dear Readers,

The 52nd Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) was held on 15 June 2026 under the Georgian Chairmanship of BSEC, to which we extend our deepest gratitude for its leadership, dedication, and successful initiatives during its term. We warmly welcome the Greek Chairmanship as the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC and look forward to advancing our common goals under its guidance.

Dear Readers,

To conclude, we hope you will enjoy reading the “News from the Black Sea”, and stay tuned with us via BSEC website and social media accounts!

***Ambassador Lazar Comanescu
Secretary General***

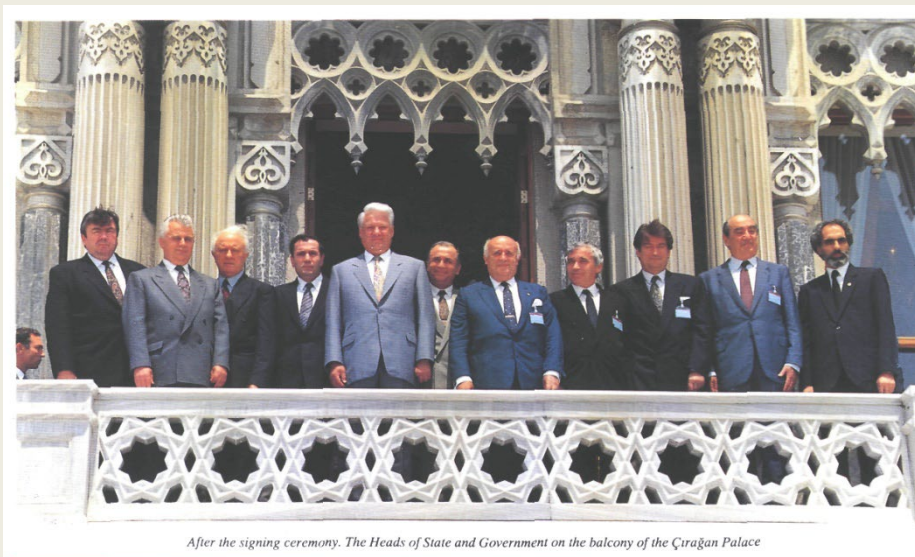


HEADLINES

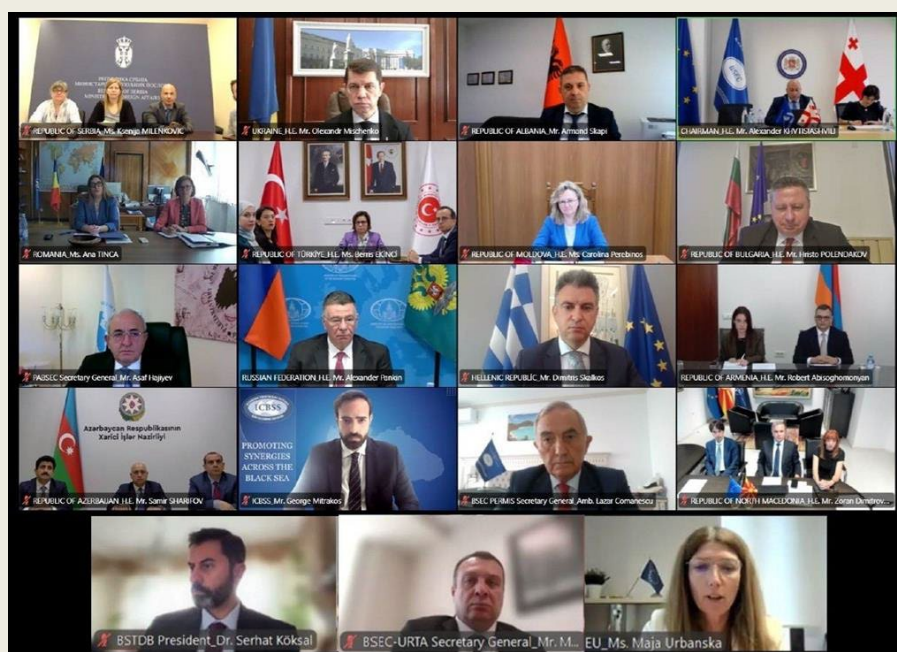
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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

34th Anniversary of BSEC

The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), was established through the signing of the historic Istanbul Summit Declaration on 25 June 1992.

52nd CMFA

The 52nd Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) of the BSEC Member States was held online on 15 June 2026.

The Ministers adopted resolutions on financial issues as well as on the BSEC-EU Interaction; agreed to renew the Sectoral Dialogue Partnership Status of the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN). The decisions on the appointments of country-coordinators of seven BSEC working groups, as well as the appointment of the post of Executive Manager in the BSEC PERMIS were also taken during the Meeting.

The Meeting was concluded with the transfer of the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC from Georgia to the Hellenic Republic for the period of 1 July – 31 December 2026.

WORKING AND COURTESY VISITS



Visit by H.E. Michael Roux, Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (BSEC Headquarters, 4 May 2026)



Courtesy visit by Dr. Regine Grienberger, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Istanbul (BSEC Headquarters, 11 June 2026)



Courtesy visit by Mr. Frank Priess, Director (interim designate) of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Office in Türkiye (BSEC Headquarters, 11 June 2026)

BSEC WORKING GROUPS/STEERING COMMITTEES

During the period covered by this Newsletter, BSEC PERMIS held Working Group meetings/workshops covering such areas as Budgetary and Financial Issues, Cross Border E-Commerce, Culture, Education, Emergency Assistance, Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information, Trade and Economic Development, and Transport.

KEY EVENTS

Workshop on Cross-Border E-commerce and WG on Trade and Economic Cooperation



A Workshop on “Cross-Border E-commerce: Navigating the Challenges for Reaping Benefits for BSEC Member States”, and a Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Economic Development (WGTED) were organized at the BSEC Headquarters on 7-8 April 2026.

The participants discussed the recent developments and cooperation among the BSEC Member States in the area of electronic commerce, including topics pertaining to challenges in defining and measuring ecommerce, consumer protection, cooperation mechanisms, role of digital platforms in ensuring product safety, etc.

ITF Annual Summit

The ITF Annual Summit was held in Leipzig (Germany) on 6-8 May 2026. The generic topic of the Summit was “Funding Resilient Transport”.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the Summit and addressed both the Open Ministerial Session and the Ministerial Roundtable on “Strategic investment in supply chains: strengthening alternative routes and corridors”. He underlined the particular importance the BSEC Organization attaches to the development of regional cooperation in the field of transport and referred in this context to the fruitful collaboration with the International Transport Forum. He also highlighted, among others, the importance

of BSEC projects and initiatives such as the Black Sea Ring Highway, the Motorways of the Sea, and the BSEC Permit System in developing linkage routes in the Euro-Asian space and promoting safe, efficient, and interconnected land and maritime routes across the wider BSEC region.



Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA



The 17th Annual Meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA was held in Astana on 15 May 2026.

The participants underlined the strategic importance of TRACECA as a key transport corridor enhancing regional connectivity, and particular highlight was on the need to promote measures aimed at reducing transit times.

BSEC PERMIS was represented at the Meeting by the Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis. Ambassador Rallis emphasized the great importance BSEC attaches to its cooperation with TRACECA in the development of sustainable transport routes and referred in this context to the Joint Roadmap elaborated by the Secretariats of BSEC and TRACECA in 2021.

BSEC-URTA General Assembly

The 47th Meeting of the General Assembly of the Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA) was held in Thessaloniki on 22 May 2026, bringing together high-level representatives of the international road transport industry in the BSEC region.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the meeting, and expressing his appreciation with regard to the long-existing BSEC-URTA cooperation, he focused on the need of finding appropriate answers to the challenges road transport faces. He emphasized in this context 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.



RCC Annual Meeting

The 18th Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was held in Sofia on 9 June 2026.

The participants and regional partners reviewed progress in implementing regional cooperation priorities.

BSEC PERMIS was represented by Executive Manager Ambassador Georgi Panayotov, who highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation among BSEC, RCC and SEECP in addressing common challenges and advancing regional connectivity, digital transformation, climate resilience and sustainable development. He also referred to the implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda

and the launch of the “Blue Port Index” project under the revitalized BSEC Project Development Fund.





SEESARI-UIC High-Level Conference

The SEESARI-UIC High-Level Conference on the Future of Rail Transport in South-East Europe was held in Belgrade on 16-17 June 2026.

The participants discussed the need for coordinated action in setting priorities for projects, particularly in the areas of digital transformation and innovation. The importance of strengthening transport links were among the key messages which emerged from the discussions. The importance of promoting links with the corresponding rail connections was also highlighted.

BSEC PERMIS was represented by Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis. He highlighted the importance attached by BSEC to strengthening links between the transport infrastructure of the Black Sea region and the wider European and Asian networks, as well as to promoting intermodal transport. He underlined the potentially catalytic role of the Project Development Fund (PDF), as well as the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), and concluded by expressing BSEC's readiness to continue and further strengthen its close cooperation with UIC.

PABSEC General Assembly

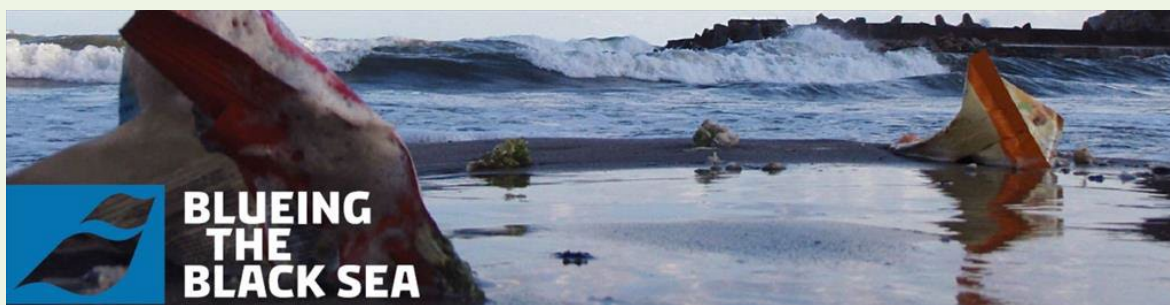


The 67th General Assembly of PABSEC was held in Mephis Kalaki, Georgia on 29 June-1 July 2026.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the General Assembly, and in his address he briefed the participants on the activities of BSEC Organization during the Georgian Chairmanship, including the BSEC-PABSEC interaction. He stressed in this context the importance of the contribution of PABSEC members to the adoption by their national parliament of legislation in support to BSEC.



OTHER EVENTS



The Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC) of the Blueing the Black Sea (BBSEA) Project was held online on 17 April 2026. The Eco-Innovation Challenge (EIC), as well as some other technical issues were among the topics discussed during the meeting.

Executive Manager Ambassador Venera Domi represented BSEC PERMIS in the meeting, and addressing the participants, referred to the BBSEA Project as an integration tool that brings countries together, builds trust, and helps resilience and prosperity which evolved into a genuine pillar of regional cooperation.

Antalya Diplomacy Forum



The 5th Edition of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF2026) was held in Antalya on 17-19 April 2026.

This year's theme was "Mapping Tomorrow, Managing Uncertainties".

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu attended the Forum, and in his remarks in the Panel on "Refining Geo-economics: How to balance global & national priorities?", underlined the important and increasing role regional organizations play as regards to promoting better understanding and encouraging closer and more pragmatic cooperation. In this framework, he elaborated on BSEC activities, its Economic Agenda for the 2024-2033 decade, and the asset it represents in terms of economic cooperation. He also made reference to the economic dimension of security and the importance of economic cooperation in enhancing security.

BSEC PERMIS First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı also attended the Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

Delphi Economic Forum



The 11th edition of the Delphi Economic Forum took place in Delphi (Greece) on 22-25 April 2026. Carried under the generic topic “The shock of the New”, the Forum covered a wide area such as developments at global and regional level, conflicts and crisis, economy and trade, energy and climate, connectivity, digitalization, AI, etc.

Ambassador Comanescu spoke in the panel on “The Three Seas at the Crossroads: Connectivity, Security and Transatlantic Renewal” and while emphasizing the importance of enhancing the connectivity networks in Central and South East Europe, he highlighted the relevance of the Black Sea region as connectivity hub, as well as the role and contribution of BSEC to promoting concrete projects in this area. He further emphasized the need of taking into account and building upon initiatives and projects developed within the Black Sea region itself, of which the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Motorways of the Sea are most relevant.

Yerevan Dialogue 2026

Yerevan Dialogue 2026 was convened in Yerevan on 5-6 May 2026, with this year’s theme “Riding Through the Storm”. A wide range of issues such as connectivity, European integration, democratic resilience, rising security concerns, and diversification were discussed during the event.



BSEC PERMIS was represented by First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı. Ambassador Kavakcı spoke in the panel titled “Financing the Green Transition: Just, Affordable, and Inclusive Energy Transitions as Means of Achieving Energy Security”, and underlined the importance BSEC attaches to green energy, as well as to tackling the challenges arise with the climate change in the region. She heeded attention to the updated BSEC Economic Agenda and encouraged countries in the region and beyond to create projects for cooperation.

NSC Black Sea and Balkans Security Forum

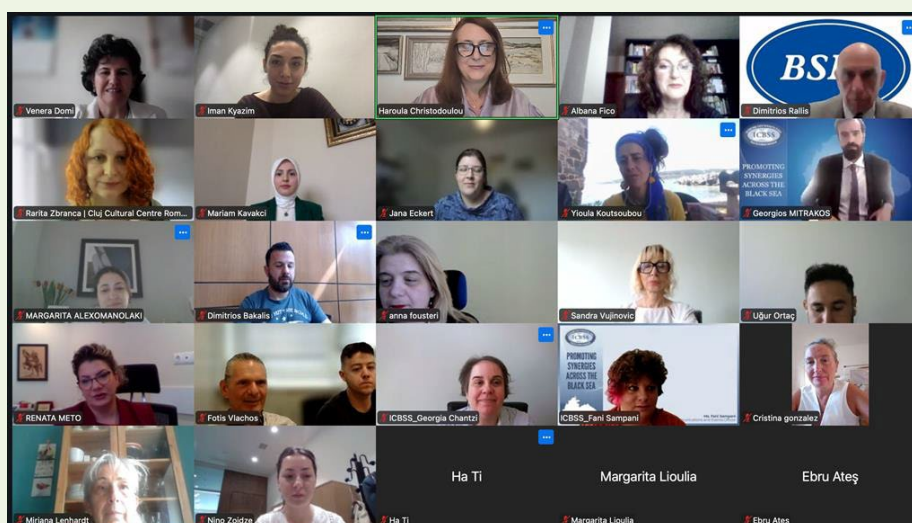


The 10th edition of the NSC Black Sea and Balkans Security Forum was held in Bucharest on 12-13 May 2026.

The forum consisted of a series of thematic panels. BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as speaker in the Panel dedicated to “Unlocking the Black Sea Offshore Energy Resources and the Future of European Supply”. He highlighted BSEC’s efforts towards promoting regional cooperation in the field of energy. He referred in this context to the need of correlation and synergies among the regional/international organizations and importance of regional ownership, respectively of building upon the initiatives and projects coming from the region itself and countries therein.

Webinar “The Role of Creative Arts in Promoting Mental Wellness”

A webinar on Culture and Health entitled “The Role of Creative Arts in Promoting Mental Wellness” was organized in cooperation with the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) on 13 May 2026. The webinar was structured in two thematic sessions: “Understanding Mental Health: Common Challenges and Misconceptions” and “Experiencing Art for Wellbeing”, providing a platform for the exchange of views on the role of creative arts in fostering mental wellbeing, reducing stigma, and promoting inclusivity.



BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis, highlighted the importance of addressing mental health through open and inclusive dialogue as a fundamental component of overall wellbeing that concerns all segments of society. He noted the intention of BSEC PERMIS to strengthen its engagement in this field, including through the integration of relevant topics into the work and agendas of the respective BSEC Working Groups.

Energy Transition Summit

An International Conference on “Energy Transition Summit: East Med & South East Europe” took place in Athens on 13–14 May 2026. The Conference addressed a broad range of issues shaping the region’s energy future, with the participants focusing on collaboration between governments, investors and businesses, aiming to balance energy security, competitiveness and social cohesion.

BSEC PERMIS was represented to the event by Executive Manager Ambassador Ashot Kocharian, in charge with energy, who elaborated on BSEC’s activities in the field of energy and the efforts of the Organization towards enhancing cooperation in this field.

Meeting of the Presidents of the Academies of Sciences

The 3rd Meeting of the Presidents of the Academies of Sciences of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Member States under the topic “Artificial Intelligence as a catalyst for scientific cooperation in the BSEC Region” was held in Sofia on 15 May 2026.

Each participant from the Member States presented their research and the developments in the area of artificial intelligence and shared their expertise. They also adopted the text of the “Joint Communiqué on the Results of the Third Meeting of the Presidents of Academies of Sciences of the BSEC Member States”.



First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı represented BSEC PERMIS at the meeting, and informed the participants about the recent activities of BSEC as well as the developments pertinent to artificial intelligence.

Burgas Connectivity Forum 2026

The Burgas Connectivity Forum 2026 “Connecting Nations: Cities, Corridors and Gateways: Europe’s Strategic Connectivity and the Black Sea” was held in Burgas on 27-28 May 2026. The two-day forum unpacked a variety of issues pertinent to connectivity and the needs of the rapidly changing world.

Upon the invitation received from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Bulgaria, BSEC PERMIS First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı represented BSEC PERMIS at the Forum and made a speech on “Advancing Black Sea Connectivity: Regional Cooperation and Economic Integration” under the panel discussion of “Burgas’ Vision for Connected Cities-Mobility, Ports, Universities, and Digital Solutions for the Future”. In her intervention, she emphasized on the need for strengthening international organizations for overcoming challenges of the region and economic development for all parties involved.



Conference of Balkan and Black Sea Regions

The International Conference of Balkan and Black Sea Regions was held in Patras (Greece) on 27–29 May 2026. The event was jointly organized by the Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC) of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), BSEC PERMIS, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC).

The participants discussed regional cooperation and sustainable development in the wider Balkan and Black Sea area and adopted the “Patras Joint Statement on Strengthening Regional Cooperation in the Balkan and Black Sea Area”. Among others,

the Statement also underlined the importance of enhanced cooperation between CPMR, BSEC and PABSEC, as well as the need for sustainable multilevel governance and long-term regional partnerships.



Policy Dialogue “Women Shaping Resilient Futures”

A Policy Dialogue “Women Shaping Resilient Futures: Gender-Responsive Recovery & Reconstructions”, was organized in Istanbul on 2 June 2026. The dialogue was part of the joint initiative “Leading for Resilience: Gender-responsive Disaster Prevention and Preparedness in Europe and Central Asia”. It provided a platform to elevate women’s voices in post-disaster recovery and reinforced the message that women’s leadership is indispensable for building resilient futures.

BSEC PERMIS Executive Manager Ambassador Venera Domi attended the event and in her keynote speech, she highlighted the importance of regional cooperation in strengthening resilience and underscored the role of organizations such as BSEC in providing platforms for dialogue, policy alignment, and partnership-building.

EIC “Shark Tank” and the RSC Committee

The Eco-Innovation Challenge (EIC) “Shark Tank” event within the framework of the “Blueing the Black Sea (BBSEA)” project, and the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) took place in Chisinau on 10–11 June 2026. BSEC PERMIS was represented by Executive Manager Ambassador Venera Domi.

The Shark Tank showcased 27 finalists, all committed to tackle pollution and environmental issues in the Black Sea region.

The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) was held on 11 June. Presentations were followed by the launch of the BBSEA Solution Bank. The participants expressed their appreciation for the Shark Tank and their support for the BBSEA Solution Bank.

EU4EMBLAS Project

The Final Meeting and Project Steering Committee of the “European Union for Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea” (EU4EMBLAS Project), was held in Istanbul on 15 June 2026. The discussions focused on topics such as leveraging new technologies for monitoring and data exchange, the Black Sea e-Data Platform, innovative risk assessment methods, etc., and concluded with reflections on the project’s overall impact, lessons learned, sustainability of results, and possible ways forward.

BSEC PERMIS was represented by Executive Manager Ambassador Venera Domi. She expressed appreciation for the work done in support of the fight against pollution in the Black Sea and underlined the need for more projects to address the existing environmental problem.

Black Sea LME project

The Inception Workshop of the GEF-UNDP-UNESCO project “Implementing Ecosystem Based management approaches in the Black Sea LME Project” (Black Sea LME project) was held in Istanbul on 15-16 June 2026. The purpose of the Workshop was to present the project’s goals, scope, activities, outputs, and outcomes to stakeholders, reaffirm their roles, and review strategies, technical elements, and work plans.

Executive Manager Ambassador Venera Domi represented BSEC PERMIS at the workshop, and expressed the readiness of BSEC to collaborate actively and to contribute to a successful implementation of the project.

Meeting on Connectivity

An online Working Meeting of Regional Organizations on Connectivity was held on 16 June 2026. Representatives of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) exchanged views on current connectivity priorities and opportunities for enhanced cooperation among regional organizations. BSEC was represented by PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Mr. Dimitrios Rallis.

Ambassador Rallis presented the BSEC perspective on connectivity, emphasizing its broad and multidimensional character.

The meeting confirmed the shared understanding that connectivity remains a strategic priority for fostering sustainable development, regional integration and prosperity across Southeast Europe and the wider Black Sea region.



FOREN 2026



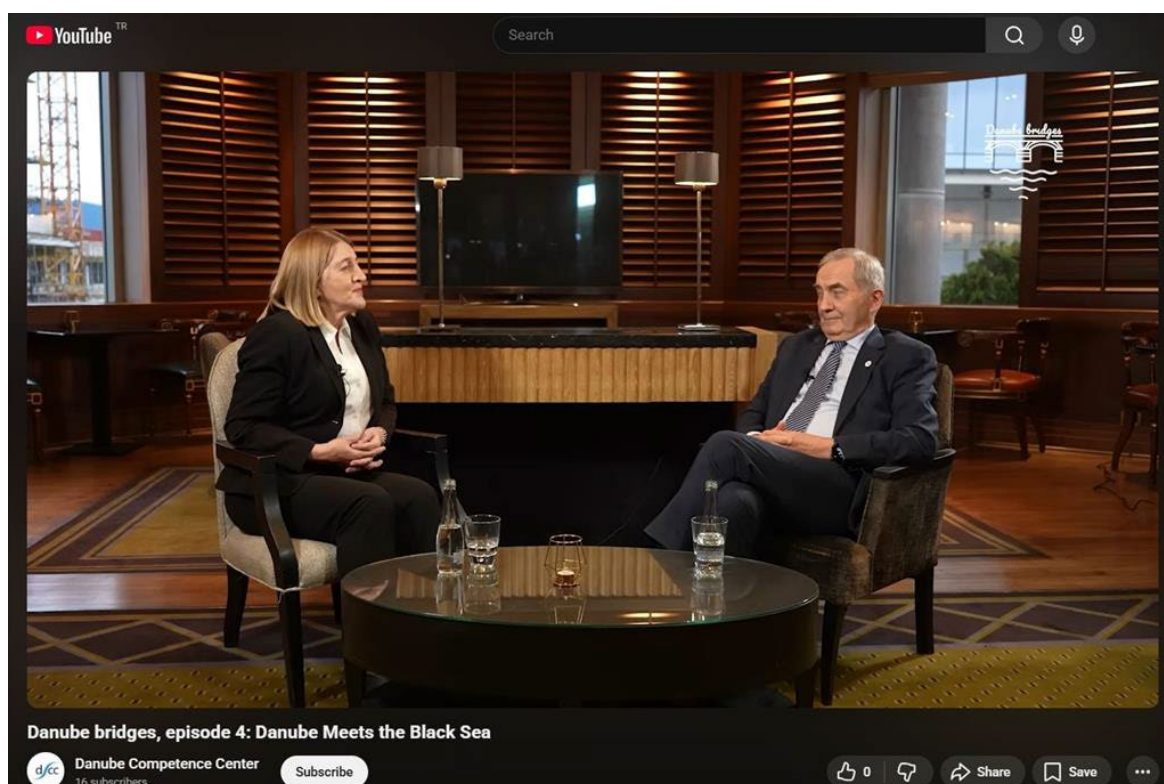
The 18th edition of the WEC Central and Eastern Europe Energy Forum – FOREN 2026, titled “Secure, Sustainable and Affordable Energy for Central and Eastern Europe” was held in Neptun (Romania) on 14-17 June 2026. The Forum provided a platform for participants to exchange information, experience, and good practices.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the Forum and in his address focused on the main activities and objectives of the BSEC Organization in the area of energy, as defined in the BSEC Economic Agenda. Executive Manager Ambassador Ashot Kocharian who also attended the event, moderated a panel on “Adapting the energy sectors to today and tomorrow’s challenges”.



A group of Business Administration students from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen (the Netherlands) visited the BSEC Headquarters on 29 April 2026. The guests were informed by the Secretary General and members of the PERMIS Staff about the mission and role of the BSEC Organization in promoting economic cooperation in the Black Sea region, as well as its activities and priorities in this regard.

STAY IN THE KNOW



BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu was featured in the Danube Bridges Podcast: Conversations Shaping the Future of Danube Tourism, in the episode 'Danube Meets the Black Sea', highlighting the importance of regional connectivity and stakeholder cooperation in advancing tourism, transport, cultural exchange, and economic development across the Black Sea and Danube regions.

Podcast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDv6SgbwJHU&t=18s>



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