



PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 15 June 2026

Participation of ICBSS Director General at the BBSEA Shark Tank Event

On Wednesday, 10 June 2026, the **ICBSS Director General, Georgios Mitrakos**, participated at the **Eco-Innovation Challenge (EIC) Shark Tank Event** in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova, organised by the **United Nations Office for Project Services** and implemented by **Civitta**.

The Eco-Innovation Challenge (EIC) is the flagship innovation initiative of **Blueing the Black Sea**, a GEF regional project implemented by the **World Bank** and executed by **UNOPS**. The regional challenge aimed to identify, fund, and mentor eco-innovative concepts that will contribute to reducing pollution in the Black Sea. In particular, the initiative invited participants from World Bank-eligible countries to present solutions that address **four major sources of marine pollution**: agricultural runoff, municipal wastewater, industrial pollution, and marine litter. A total of **186 applications** were received from innovators in 40 countries, and **27 finalists** were selected to advance to the final stage of the programme. In this framework, the Shark Tank Event marked the conclusion of the challenge, where the selected finalists pitched their sustainability proposals to a jury of investors, regional experts, and key stakeholders.

The evaluation process comprised two separate sessions, with proposals assessed according to the competition window under which the candidates had applied: the **'Focus Country Window'**, for registered organisations such as start-ups, NGOs, universities, and consortia, whose **nine winners** will receive grant funding and implementation support; and the **'Greater Black Sea Window'**, for individuals, students, researchers, and early-stage start-ups lacking formal registration or grant management capacity, whose **six winners** will receive mentorship and technical assistance for a period of six months to further develop their ideas.

Mr. Mitrakos served as **jury member** at the official selection committee of the **'Greater Black Sea Window'** final evaluation session by engaging constructively with applicants, providing professional feedback, and contributing to the final selection discussion. His involvement in the evaluation process assisted in determining which ideas of this specific window will be materialised and benefit the long-term environmental health of the Black Sea by receiving funding, technical assistance, and international acceleration support.

During the Eco-Innovation Challenge Shark Tank Event, and prior to the announcement of the winners, Mr. Mitrakos also participated as **speaker** in a fireside chat session on the theme **"What does it take to turn environmental innovation into real impact?"**. The discussion focused

on the characteristics of a promising environmental innovation, the challenges innovators face in the Black Sea region, and the role of governments, investors and development partners in facilitating the transition of solutions from pilot to implementation phase.

This working visit aligns with ICBSS' commitment to fostering dialogue, sharing knowledge, and building partnerships to promote sustainability and development in the wider Black Sea region and beyond.

For more information about the Blueing the Black Sea Project, please visit <https://bbsea.project.unops.org/>

For more information about the ICBSS, please visit <https://icbss.org/>

About the ICBSS: The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) was founded in 1998 as a non-profit organisation. It has since fulfilled a dual function. On the one hand, it is an independent research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea region. On the other hand, it is a related body of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and its think-tank. Thus, the ICBSS pursues applied, policy-oriented research, promotes knowledge on the Black Sea region both within and outside its boundaries, and offers policy advice with the aim of fostering multilateral cooperation among the BSEC member states as well as with their international partners.