

PRESS KIT

Three Seas Virtual Summit and Web Forum
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Estonia

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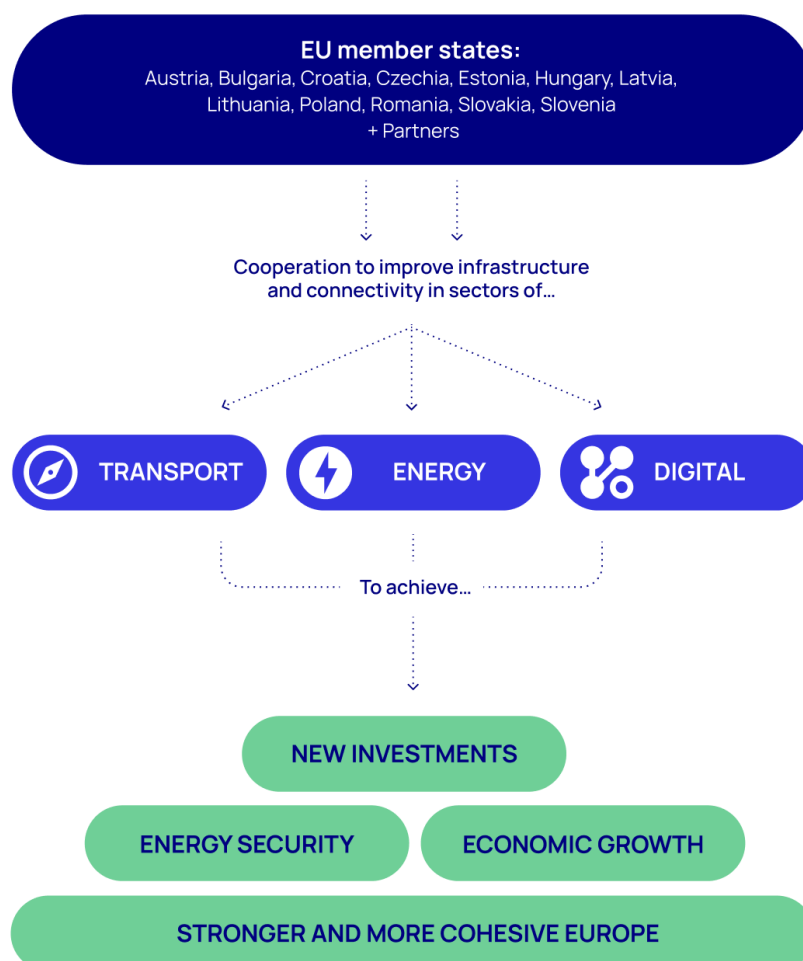
What is the Three Seas Initiative?

The Three Seas Initiative is a platform launched at the presidential level to invigorate the economy of Central and Eastern Europe. The region is notable for its strong development potential and fast-growing economies, on the one hand, and the ballast of years-long infrastructural underinvestment on the other. Eliminating the € 1.16 trillion shortfall in investments in the infrastructure would give an enormous boost to the region and make Europe stronger and more united as a whole.

The objectives of the Three Seas include more efficient cross-border cooperation, economic growth and security through the development of energy, transport and digital infrastructures. The Three Seas has also become a project that reinforces transatlantic relations between US and Europe.



HOW DOES THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE WORK?



A total of 12 EU Member States between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas are currently involved in the Three Seas Initiative: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Its key partners are Germany, the European Union and the United States.

By area, the Three Seas countries represent almost a third of the European Union and are home to 111 million people. However, figures from 2018 show that their average GDP per capita is just 78% of the EU average. At the same time, the average economic growth in the 12 countries from 2015-2019 was 3.5% compared to 2.1% in the European Union.

The goal of the Three Seas Digital Summit is to focus the activities of the initiative and clarify its objectives. Whereas much of the attention in the initiative to date has been turned to transport and energy issues, the event in Tallinn will focus separately on digitalisation and smart connectivity.

More information about the Three Seas [objectives](#) can be found from the initiative's [website](#).

How was the Three Seas Initiative born?

History has dealt these Central and Eastern European nations very different hands, and their cultural and religious backgrounds are similarly diverse. Nevertheless, the stories of all 12 countries have one chapter in common: the Iron Curtain, which split Europe in two and stifled natural development, economic growth, and international unity in the region for half a century.

Whereas the nations of Western Europe are linked by roads and railways, power lines, and oil and gas pipelines, countries in Central and Eastern Europe remain comparatively disconnected from one another in terms of modern infrastructure. The deficit is particularly acute along the region's north-south axis.

Lack of investment

Although the common economic and customs space of the European Union has paved the way for the stable development of the continent as a whole, countries in Central and Eastern Europe continue to stand out from their counterparts in Western Europe for their economic disparity and outdated infrastructure. Despite the collective policies of the European Union, the gap that developed in the latter half of the 20th century has yet to be bridged. The shortfall in investments in the infrastructure, energy and digital fields is estimated to have grown over the years to as much as 1.16 trillion euros. Eliminating this deficit would give an enormous boost to development in the region and make Europe stronger and more united as a whole.

The birth of the Three Seas initiative

Attention was drawn to Europe's disparity in development in 2014 by a US think tank, the Atlantic Council, in a report entitled 'Completing Europe'. This inspired the then heads of state of two countries – President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović of Croatia and President Andrzej Duda of Poland – to launch an initiative, which has gone on to attract more and more senior figures and leading players from the worlds of business

and politics. Each year, the Three Seas story gains a new chapter that looks to the future.

To date, the Three Seas Initiative summits have been held four times at the presidential level. What started out as a platform for the exchange of thoughts among the presidents of the countries involved, has expanded to include an annual business forum and the launch of an investment fund operating on a commercial basis. Politicians at executive levels of power in the 12 countries are also becoming increasingly involved in the initiative, and both Germany and the United States have become partners to it.

From the outset, the Three Seas was designed to complement rather than compete with the European Union. This is reflected in the close involvement of the European Commission in the initiative and its participation in all of the most recent summits.

What will happen in Tallinn?

Tallinn will host the Three Seas Virtual Summit and Web Forum on October 19, which will open with a debate between heads of state. The meeting will include presentations and discussions on the funding of international infrastructure projects, and will offer solutions for the digitisation of the energy and transport sectors. Estonia, as the world's first digital society, will be showcasing the Smart Connectivity vision created to support the development of the Three Seas region. The event will be broadcast live online, moderated by Gideon Rachman, the chief foreign affairs commentator for the Financial Times.

Three focus areas:

- firstly, the future and role of the initiative in enhancing the economic growth and energy security of participating states;
- secondly, the funding of international projects in the fields of energy, transport and digital infrastructure in the Three Seas region;
- and thirdly, outlining the Smart Connectivity vision. The latter represents an additional contribution on Estonia's part to help find ways of making more effective use of infrastructure.

The aim of Smart Connectivity is to establish a growth platform for innovative services and to support economic growth based on innovation. This could ultimately lead, for example, to the automatisisation of road transport and the smart transformation of electricity networks, allowing consumers to simultaneously play the roles of energy consumer, producer and saver. In order to realise this ambitious vision, the same principles will need to be observed throughout the Three Seas region when constructing transport and energy infrastructure and there will need to be a greater focus on the open exchange of data and the use of data that have been amassed.

You can find more information about the agenda [here](#).

Smart Connectivity

Named 'the most advanced digital society in the world' by Wired, Estonians are pathfinders, who have built an efficient, secure and transparent ecosystem that delivers great value. [e-Estonia](#) has led to creating a society with more transparency, trust and efficiency. Estonians have learned that developing e-solutions is not merely about adding something (a digital layer) but changing everything.

Overview of the Smart Connectivity

The Three Seas (3S) region is facing a series of interconnected challenges in relation to the expansion of digitalisation to improve the competitiveness of the region and reduce its carbon footprint.

The overall vision of Smart Connectivity is to expand digital components across key infrastructure, which will in turn support new business models and technologies, such as real-time economy management, a renewable friendly smart grid, smart logistics and traffic management. It is about making investments in energy and transport future-proof.

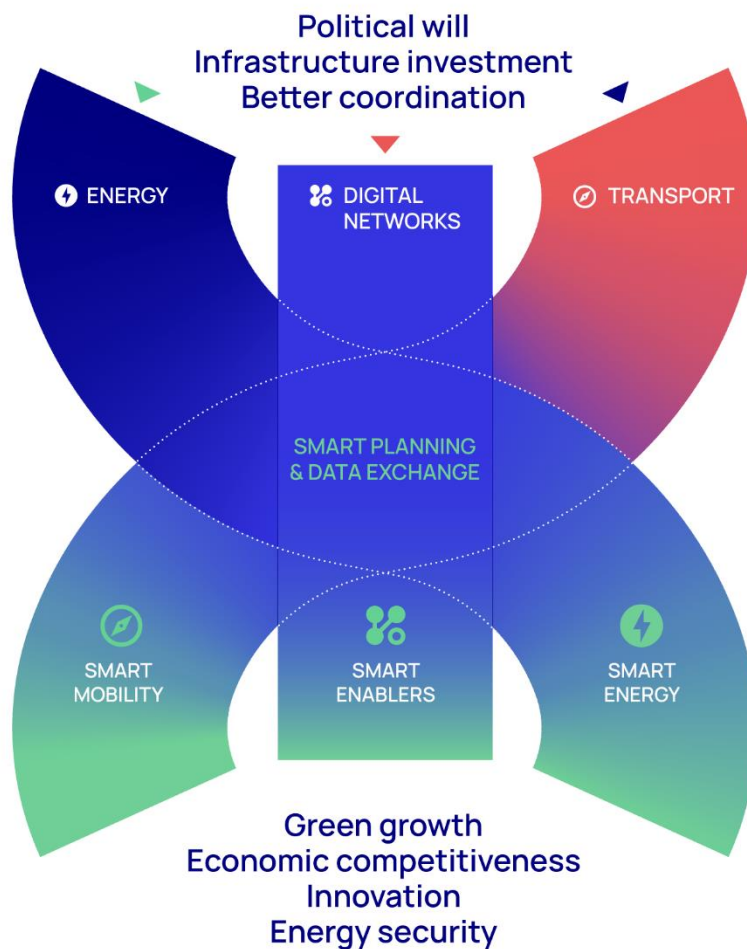
Smart Connectivity is a push to link our energy and transport infrastructure with digital platforms and services that allow for the best management of linked infrastructure. The respective areas concentrate on mobility opportunities arising from digitalisation and Smart Energy, describing the outlook for a greener real-time energy market aimed at prosumers (i.e. consumers and producers in one). Smart energy and smart mobility advances and integration are possible by putting in place the necessary digital enablers – the ability to share and re-use bits and bytes will move our region forward.

Let's envision that in the foreseeable future the 3S region, which previously enjoyed only limited interconnectivity, has turned the tables through joint and coordinated efforts in regard to smart connectivity.

The 3S region is a global hotspot for smart mobility and energy innovation, developing and selling solutions around the globe.

The 3S region is one integrated energy area, as well as a vital part of the European energy union. Our energy markets are linked, helping each of the countries in the region to manage its energy demand and supply more efficiently and ensuring energy security without reliance on outside players.

Whether in a village in Poland or a city in Austria, we have active prosumers – where there is wind, water or sunshine, there are energy producers feeding the entire region with much-needed clean energy. Real-time data flows, and the adoption of smart monitoring and interlinked grids also allows for smarter energy management. This has raised the countries in the 3S region to the very top in rankings of energy use efficiency.



In a similar way, smart transportation corridors cover the whole 3S region. Autonomous and sustainably powered vehicles can traverse the entire region, from north to south or from east to west and back again. This brings with it new mobility services and unlocks multi-modality, which offers more connectivity and saves time and money in return. This is especially visible in freight transport, where goods move from factories via autonomous on-demand vehicles on smart roads or railways to smart logistics centres without labour-intensive human work and with no (paper) bureaucracy creating friction in the supply chain. Real-time data flows, while the likes of digital documentation, smart controls and supervision and optimised infrastructure and traffic management make this possible. As a related outcome, transportation has finally become environmentally friendly – carbon neutral and low in energy use.

In order to fulfil this potential, the Three Seas Initiative needs political will, greater coordination and alignment between its priority projects. Ultimately, if governed consistently and sustainably, this coordination should create a virtuous cycle of investment and innovation, positioning 3S Member States as leaders in the global digital and green economy.

Achievements of Estonia in advancing the Three Seas Initiative

Estonia was named the next host of the Three Seas Summit and Business Forum at the Ljubljana Summit in Slovenia in June, 2019. Since then a lot of work has been done.

One of the main targets for us was to find headwind for the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund. The first thing we did was joining the fund. During this year five more countries have joined or are about to join the fund taking the overall number from two to eight. This also shows that the Three Seas Initiative participating countries have faith in the cooperation platform. The faith in the fund is also supported by the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's pledge to contribute up to one billion dollars to the development of the region's infrastructure.

Secondly, to increase the practical value of the Three Seas Initiative we reinforced the cooperation on a governmental level by organising the first Three Seas Foreign Ministers Meeting. Up until now, presidents have pioneered the initiative; however, achieving tangible results requires capabilities conducive to a suitable environment. The role of governments in the initiative is essential for closing infrastructure and connectivity gaps and achieving new economic growth.

Thirdly, continuing on a very practical level, we created the technical secretariat to ensure the smooth organization of the next summit and business forum, and the general coordination of the Three Seas Initiative. The secretariat will work from Tallinn until the end of the year. Then member states of the initiative will make a new decision on what should be its tasks, further work processes and location.

Along with the secretariat we set up permanent communication channels for the initiative with new website and social media channels. The Three Seas Initiative now has an eye-catching corporate visual identity and clear guidelines on how to implement it.

Four. During last two years all the participating countries have highlighted their most important infrastructure projects in energy, transport and digital sectors. We turned it into a digital, easy-to-access web portal and an informative environment for investors from all over the world to get valuable information about the most important infrastructure projects in the region. It will contribute into involving more private capital into closing the infrastructure investment gap between Three Seas region and Western Europe. The portal will be launched during the Three Seas Virtual Summit and Web Forum.

The last deliverable may have the biggest impact on the future of Three Seas Initiative. As expected from Estonians we enforced the digital pillar of the initiative and created a Smart Connectivity vision for the whole region. Smart Connectivity is a push to link our energy and transport infrastructure with digital platforms and services. Data and digital solutions are no longer big or smart, capabilities or innovation, but an essential part of every undertaking. We put forward the idea to expand digital components across key infrastructure, which will in turn support new business models and technologies, such as real-time economy management, a

renewable friendly smart grid or traffic management. It is about making investments in energy and transport future-proof.

Realising this idea will make the Three Seas region a global hotspot for smart mobility and energy innovation, developing and selling solutions around the globe.

Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund

The Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund is designed to provide economic support for the political initiative uniting the interests of 12 European countries. The shared intent of these countries is to develop the region's infrastructure, which requires significant investment. The fund supports the practical implementation of ambitious infrastructure projects.

The Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund was registered in Luxembourg on 29 May 2019. The signatories to its memorandum of association were the Polish development bank, Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, and the Export-Import bank of Romania, EximBank, which were also its first investors. In February 2020, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that, with the backing of Congress and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, the United States would be contributing a billion dollars to the fund.

The fund welcomes investments not only from countries, but also from pension funds, private capital investment funds and private investors. The total volume of the fund is planned to be between 3 and 5 billion euros.

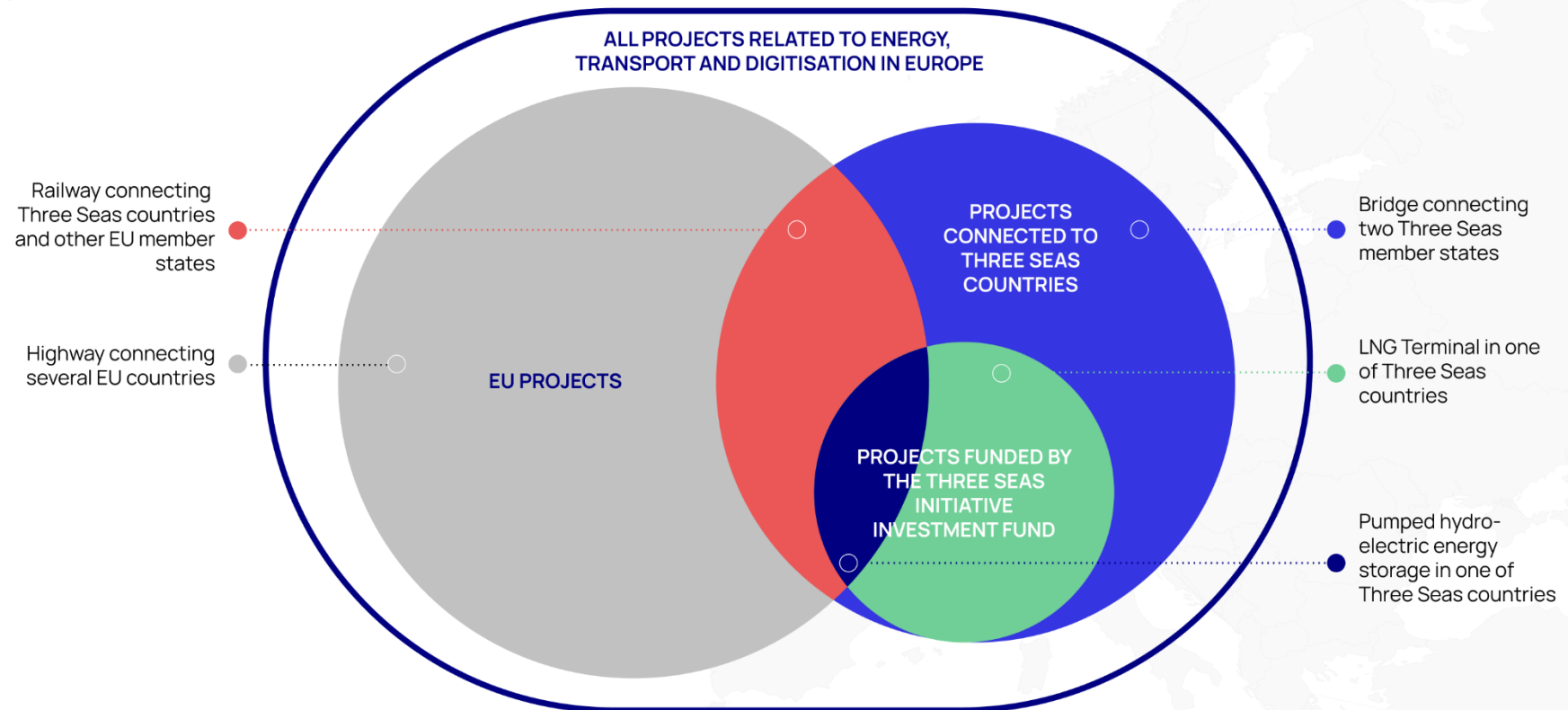
One of the aims of the annual Three Seas Initiative Summit and Business Forum is to increase investment activity in the region's economy and to attract international investors. The fund is one of tools in this process and while it does have the political support of its member states, politicians from the countries do not intervene in its activities or influence its investment decisions. The fund is managed according to commercial business principles: investment projects are selected based on their profitability, since the aim of the organisation is to turn a profit for investors.

The fund does not aim to compete with the existing financial instruments and national financing models of the European Union, but rather to complement them. In this way, it will be able to support infrastructure projects in Central and Eastern Europe in larger volumes and accelerate their implementation.

The investment advisor to the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund is the Amber Infrastructure Group.

The shortfall in investments in the Three Seas region infrastructure is estimated to have grown over the years to as much as 1.16 trillion euros. So, the fund won't cover all the needs of the region and important infrastructure projects need funding from other sources as well.

From the next page you will find an infographic describing how infrastructure projects may have different sources for financing.



Past Summits

Dubrovnik Summit 2016

The first Summit of the Three Seas Initiative was held on 25-26 August, 2016 in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and was hosted by the President of Croatia, Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović.

The 2016 Summit set the stage for a flexible high-level format of dialogue that would address the connectivity issues of the region. The Three Seas Initiative was endorsed as an informal platform for securing political support and decisive action on specific cross-border and macro-regional projects of strategic importance to the States involved in energy, transportation, digital communication and economic sectors.

[Joint Declaration](#)

Warsaw Summit 2017

The second Summit of the Three Seas Initiative was held on July 6, 2017 in Warsaw, Poland, and was hosted by the President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda.

Out of twelve, ten Three Seas countries were represented by heads of state (two by other high level representatives). Additionally, the Three Seas high level meeting was attended by the United States President Donald Trump.

The Warsaw Summit provided a strong political and promotional base for the further activities of this regional format. Among other things, it reaffirmed the commitment to strengthen unity of the EU, develop and integrate transport connections of the region into the trans-European (TEN-T) network, as well as to implement the EU's Energy policy objectives. At the Summit the first list of the Three Seas joint economic projects was adopted and the need to promote its business character was emphasized. The Presidents and high representatives of the twelve member states defined the main principles of the cooperation within the initiative and decided on establishing the Three Seas Business Forum as a platform of economic cooperation in the region.

During the Warsaw Summit the United States pledged strong support and willingness to cooperate within the Three Seas as a partner state. By extension, the Summit reaffirmed the strategic significance of the transatlantic co-operation.

[Joint Declaration](#)

Bucharest Summit 2018

The third Summit of the Three Seas initiative was held on 17-18 September, 2018 in Bucharest, Romania, and was hosted by President of Romania Klaus Iohannis.

The Summit was attended by the majority of Heads of States from the 12 participating states to the Initiative, the E.U. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and other high-profile guests.

The Summit acknowledged that the fundamental pillars and objectives of the initiative are threefold – boosting economic development, strengthening the cohesion of the European Union and enriching the transatlantic ties.

The main objective of the Bucharest Summit was to mark important progress in linking the high-level political support of Heads of States to the Initiative to concrete deliverables.

A key deliverable of the Three Seas Initiative Summit in Bucharest was to shortlist priority interconnection projects in the three fields – energy, digital, and transportation – thus answering the needs and priorities of the participating countries, while at the same time substantially contributing to the overall goal of the Three Seas of facilitating higher interconnectivity in the region and between it and the rest of Europe.

In the framework of the 2018 Bucharest Summit, the 1st edition of the Business Forum was held, unfolding under the High Patronage of the President of Romania. The Business Forum gathered over 600 officials and business representatives from the participating States, from other EU Member States, from the US, from non-EU States from the broad region of South-East Europe.

On the occasion of the 3SI Business Forum, the Letter of Intent in relation to the establishment of the Three Seas Investment Fund was signed by relevant financial institutions intending to participate in the Fund, with the aim at pipelining, supporting and financing of the priority interconnection projects, as well as other future Three Seas projects.

The Three Seas Initiative Network of Chambers of Commerce from the participating states was created in order to support the activities of the Business Forum and connect the business communities in the region.

The Summit and the Business Forum attracted the involvement, support and interest from partner states and institutions, namely the Governments of the United States and Germany, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank Group.

[Joint Declaration](#)

[Ljubljana Summit 2019](#)

The fourth Summit and second Business Forum were held on 5–6 June, 2019 in Brdo and Ljubljana, Slovenia, and were hosted by the President of the Republic of Slovenia Borut Pahor.

Along with the heads of states of the Member States (nine attended the Ljubljana Summit and three countries were represented by other high representatives), EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier and US Secretary of Energy Rick Perry attended the high-level meeting as representatives of the partner states.

The Ljubljana Summit reaffirmed the message of unity and equality regarding the future of the EU and the readiness of the participants to work toward a modern, sustainable and innovative Europe. The presidents and high-level representatives of the 12 participating states addressed the transitional and geopolitical challenges of the EU between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas.

The Business Forum reaffirmed energy, infrastructure and digitalisation as essential areas of the Three Seas, with security, innovation and the environment as cross-cutting topics. The Priority Interconnection Projects Status Report was presented, with updates given on its progress. It was decided that the Progress Report will provide a periodic evaluation of the implementation of the Three Seas projects at future summits.

[Joint Declaration](#)

Contact for media representatives

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Photos and videos for free use (during and after the event) will be published here: <https://3seas.eu/media/press-info/photos-and-videos>

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