



**Adensamer,
Johannes**

Johannes Adensamer is Deputy Managing Director of the Trade Association of Bus, Aviation and Shipping Companies at the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich). In this role, he is responsible for aviation-related affairs, industry representation, collective bargaining negotiations, and legislative consultation processes concerning the Austrian transport and aviation sectors.

His work covers a broad range of aviation stakeholders, including airlines, airports, business aviation operators, helicopter companies, flight schools, ballooning and parachuting organizations. He is actively involved in policy development, regulatory dialogue, and the representation of industry interests at national and European level.

Before joining the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber in his current role in 2021, Adensamer held several senior positions within the Vienna Chamber of Commerce over two decades, focusing on transport, mobility, digitalization, entrepreneurship, and business advisory services. He also managed sectoral organizations related to taxi services, transport operators, and driving schools in Vienna.

Adensamer studied International Business and Trade Sciences at the Vienna University of Economics and Business and completed an exchange semester at the Complutense University of Madrid. His professional interests include aviation policy, transport regulation, mobility innovation, and economic development.



**Baltina,
Vesna**

Vesna Baltina is Deputy Mayor for Strategic Development, Digitalization, and Climate Adaptation in the Municipality of Burgas. She leads the city's integrated development strategy, focusing on green mobility, energy efficiency, climate resilience, and smart-city innovation.

Baltina oversees key initiatives related to the digital transformation of Burgas, including the Smart Burgas digital-twin project, which integrates urban data and smart technologies to support sustainable city management and public services. She has also worked on partnerships for the development of 5G infrastructure and regional digital innovation ecosystems.

Her professional work is closely connected to European programmes and policies in the fields of urban development, environmental sustainability, and climate adaptation. She has contributed to positioning Burgas as one of the leading Bulgarian cities in digital innovation and sustainable urban planning.

With a background in environmental policy, her professional interests include smart-city development, climate governance, circular economy initiatives, and the integration of technology into public administration.



**Prof. Dr. Baltov,
Milen**

Prof. Dr. Milen Baltov has been Rector of Burgas Free University since 2022, after serving for more than a decade as Vice Rector and Head of the PhD programme in Business. He has been part of the university since 2005, lecturing in business planning, innovation and investment management, and project management.

Alongside his academic career, he has worked as an international expert and consultant for organizations including ICAP Group, ECORYS, GOPA, Ramboll Engineering Consultants, SDA Bocconi School of Management, and Publicis Consultants, contributing to projects in business development, innovation, and strategic management across Europe.

Baltov is actively involved in international academic and innovation networks and participates in European initiatives related to innovation, higher education, and regional development. His professional interests focus on entrepreneurship, circular economy, and strategic development in the Black Sea region.

He is also founder of MC Baltis and earlier in his career worked in the aviation sector at Bulgaria Air. He holds a degree in Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship from the University of National and World Economy and completed doctoral studies and specialization in management consulting for SMEs at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland.



**Beckmann-
Dierkes, Norbert**

Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes is Head of the Bulgaria Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. A political scientist with extensive international experience, he has worked for decades on European cooperation, political dialogue, and regional development initiatives across Central and Eastern Europe.

Before assuming his position in Bulgaria, he served between 2015 and 2022 as Country Director of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Serbia and Montenegro. Earlier he headed the foundation's offices for Latvia, Lithuania, Scandinavia, and Baltic Sea Cooperation.

His professional career within the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has included leadership and advisory roles related to European and international cooperation, EU-Russia dialogue, political education, and conference management. Earlier in his career he worked in youth education and political organization in Germany.

Beckmann-Dierkes studied Political Science, Geography, and Medieval History at the University of Münster in Germany.



**Berresheim,
Volker**

Dr. Volker Berresheim has served as Chairman of the German-Bulgarian Forum since 2019. A career diplomat with extensive international experience, his work has focused on European integration, foreign policy, economic relations, and intercultural dialogue.

Before entering the German diplomatic service, he worked as managing partner of a technology startup and as a research assistant and lecturer at Saarland University, where he also completed studies in economics and European integration and later earned his doctorate.

His diplomatic career began at the German Foreign Office in Bonn, followed by postings in Indonesia, Benin, France, Israel, Poland, Eritrea, Togo, and Djibouti. He also worked on the coordination of Germany's policy regarding the eastern enlargement of the European Union and later served as Ambassador for Religion and Foreign Policy in Berlin.

Throughout his career, Berresheim has combined diplomatic, academic, and policy expertise with a strong focus on international cooperation and European affairs.



**Çejku,
Arben**

Arben Çejku is Executive Director of the Albanian Center for Good Governance (ACGG), a position he has held since 2014. His work focuses on regional cooperation, diplomacy, governance, and public policy in the Western Balkans.

A career diplomat, he previously served as Ambassador of Albania to North Macedonia and as Deputy Head of Mission and Chief of the Albanian Diplomatic Mission in Kosovo. He is one of the founders of the Council of Albanian Ambassadors and has worked extensively on regional political dialogue, Euro-Atlantic integration, and Balkan affairs.

Earlier in his career, Çejku worked as a journalist and media commentator in Albania and later co-founded the Albanian Diplomatic Academy. He is also the author of several books, including Kosovo – Sovereignty vs Integrity, dedicated to diplomacy and regional politics in Southeast Europe.

He holds a Master's degree in History and Philology from the University of Tirana and completed diplomatic and European integration training in Vienna, Berlin, and NATO programmes.



**Chollet,
Andreas**

Andreas Chollet is Managing Director of wpd eastern europe GmbH and Head of International Project Development at wpd, one of Europe’s leading renewable energy developers. With more than two decades of experience in the energy sector, he specializes in the development of international wind energy and renewable infrastructure projects across Europe.

Since joining wpd in 2006, Chollet has held several senior leadership positions, including Managing Director of wpd Italia and Head of Project Development for European operations. His work focuses on renewable energy investment, strategic project development, and the expansion of sustainable energy solutions in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe.

Earlier in his career, he worked as Project Manager at Enersys GmbH, gaining experience in energy systems and infrastructure development.

Chollet holds a degree in Energy Engineering from the Technical University of Berlin and a Master’s degree in East European Studies from Freie Universität Berlin. He also completed language studies in Russian at Lomonosov Moscow State University. His professional interests include renewable energy, energy transition, sustainable infrastructure, and international project development.



**Cucuietu,
Tatiana**

Tatiana Cucuietu is a Moldovan engineer and public administration official currently serving as Deputy Secretary General of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, a position she has held since 2024. She is also a Member of Parliament in the 2025–2029 legislature representing the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), where she serves on the Parliamentary Committee for European Integration.

Before entering national politics, Cucuietu worked for more than sixteen years as a senior design engineer at the Municipal Design Institute “Chişinăuproiect,” specializing in electrical systems and infrastructure projects. Between 2020 and 2024, she served as Operational Director and Regional Coordinator of the Party of Action and Solidarity, contributing to organizational development and political coordination.

She holds a degree in Electrical Systems and Networks from the Technical University of Moldova and a Master’s degree in European Studies from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iaşi, Romania. Her professional interests include European integration, public administration, infrastructure development, and governance reform.



**Dr. Fiesinger,
Klaus**

Dr. Klaus Fiesinger is Regional Director for Southeast Europe at the Hanns Seidel Foundation. A political scientist with longstanding experience in European affairs and regional cooperation, he has worked for decades on projects related to democracy, governance, political education, and international cooperation in Central, Eastern, and Southeast Europe.

Since 1992, he has headed the Division for Central, East and Southeast Europe and Central Asia at the Hanns Seidel Foundation in Munich. In 2015, he assumed the additional role of Regional Director for Southeast Europe.

From 2004 to 2012, Dr. Fiesinger was Visiting Professor at Andr ssy University in Budapest. He is a frequent lecturer on topics including Euroregions, cross-border police cooperation, and political education.

He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Munich and is a member of the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) in Vienna and the Southeast Europe Association ("S dosteuropa Gesellschaft"). He is also the author of the book Ballhausplatz-Diplomatie 1945-1949.



**Filipov,
Deyan**

Deyan Filipov is a Bulgarian law student at Sofia University. His interests include connectivity, energy and transport policy, regional cooperation, semiotics, remembrance, and international affairs.

He has worked at Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Bulgaria for nearly one and a half years as an assistant and was recently promoted to Social Media Assistant, where he oversees social media communication and digital outreach.

In late 2025, he co-founded "BG Positive," an independent student-led media initiative focused on highlighting positive developments in Bulgaria, including innovation, entrepreneurship, regional development, connectivity, and opportunities for youth development and civic engagement, with the main goal of countering predominantly negative traditional media coverage of the country.

Filipov has participated in numerous international academic and civic initiatives including Erasmus+ projects across Europe, the DSS Model United Nations Sofia, and the Burgas Connectivity Forum 2025, where he served as moderator of the panel "Developing Sustainable Connectivity in Energy" and as project assistant.



**Gadzhev,
Hristo**

Hristo Gadzhev is a Bulgarian politician and Member of Parliament from GERB-SDS, serving in multiple consecutive National Assemblies since 2014. He is one of Bulgaria's leading parliamentary experts in the fields of defense, security, and Euro-Atlantic cooperation.

Gadzhev has served as Chair of the Parliamentary Defense Committee in the 48th and 49th National Assemblies, and previously as Deputy Chair of the committee in the 47th National Assembly. He also served as Deputy Head of the Bulgarian Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and participated in the Committee on European Union Affairs and several parliamentary friendship groups.

Before entering parliament, he worked as parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Culture and later at the Ministry of Defence, as well as on projects related to employment and social policy for the European Commission. He has played an active role in legislative initiatives related to defense modernization, strategic planning, and Bulgaria's military and technical support for Ukraine.

Gadzhev holds degrees in International Relations from the University of National and World Economy and International Business Relations from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He speaks English and French.



**Georgiev,
Yasen**

Yasen Georgiev is Acting Executive Director of the Economic Policy Institute in Sofia, where his work focuses on the intersection of economics, public policy, and international relations. His research interests include regional connectivity, European integration, infrastructure policy, and strategic development in Southeast Europe.

He has contributed to a number of policy analyses and international research initiatives, including studies on the Trans-European Transport Network, Corridor VIII, and the Three Seas Initiative. His work explores the relationship between regional infrastructure, economic development, and European security architecture.

Georgiev is also a member of the National Advisory Board of the Diplomatic Institute and the Public Consultations Council within the Committee on European Affairs of the Bulgarian National Assembly.

He holds a degree in International Relations from the University of National and World Economy and a Master of Business Administration from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".



**Georgieva,
Milena**

Milena Georgieva is Software Engineering Manager at Commerzbank and a technology leader with more than fifteen years of experience in the software industry, specializing in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the development of high-performing engineering teams. She has worked on projects involving AI-driven analytics, explainable AI, predictive models, and the integration of intelligent systems into real business environments across the technology sector.

Throughout her career, she has combined technical expertise with strategic thinking and a strong focus on education, innovation, and talent development. She has extensive experience in building engineering academies, mentorship programmes, and practical training initiatives aimed at preparing young talents and future software professionals for the rapidly evolving digital economy.

Her work bridges technology and human development, with particular interest in how AI can support better decision-making, workforce transformation, and sustainable organizational growth. She is actively engaged in discussions around the future of work, digital skills, and the responsible adoption of emerging technologies.

Today, her professional focus is on the intersection of education, artificial intelligence, and the future of work — exploring how technology can not only automate processes, but also help develop more capable, adaptable, and critical-thinking professionals.



**Dr. Ghincea,
Marius**

Dr. Marius Ghincea is a political scientist specializing in international relations, European integration, grand strategy, and foreign and security policy in Central and Eastern Europe. Since 2024, he has been a postdoctoral researcher at ETH Zurich, where his work focuses on the domestic politics of international relations and the dynamics of strategic decision-making in liberal democracies.

He received his PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute in Florence in 2024. His dissertation examined how foreign policy consensus is formed and maintained in democratic systems.

Ghincea has held research and teaching positions at a number of leading international institutions, including George Washington University as a Fulbright Scholar and Global Leaders Fellow, St Antony's College at the University of Oxford as an EUI-Oxford Dahrendorf Fellow, the Hertie School in Berlin, Syracuse University, Johns Hopkins University SAIS in Bologna, and the School of Transnational Governance in Florence. He is also a re:constitution fellow, a programme of Forum Transregionale Studien and

Democracy Reporting International funded by Stiftung Mercator.

His research focuses particularly on Romania, the Black Sea region, European security, and the interaction between domestic politics and foreign policy in Central and Eastern Europe.



**Hackaj,
Ardian**

Ardian Hackaj is Research Director at the Cooperation and Development Institute in Tirana and Coordinator of the Tirana Connectivity Forum. His work focuses on regional connectivity, European integration, infrastructure policy, and institutional reform in the Western Balkans.

Hackaj has authored research and policy analyses on the Berlin Process, the EU Connectivity Agenda, the Belt and Road Initiative, and governance reforms in the Western Balkans. Through the Tirana Connectivity Forum, he contributes to regional dialogue on transport, economic development, and strategic cooperation in Southeast Europe.

During his career, he has held academic and management positions at the College of Europe in Bruges, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations, and the European Commission.

He holds a Master's degree from the College of Europe, a degree in International Economics from Université Lumière Lyon II, and additional studies at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Lyon.



**Hadzhiyanev,
Mihail**

Mihail Hadzhiyanev is Chairman of the Municipal Council of Burgas, a position he has held since 2023. A lawyer and public figure, he oversees the legislative work, institutional coordination, and strategic governance of the municipality.

Before assuming the role of chairman, he was actively involved in electoral commissions and local public administration, contributing to municipal policy development and institutional processes in Burgas.

As Chairman of the Municipal Council, he coordinates the work of the standing committees and municipal councillors and participates in initiatives related to education, local governance, culture, and regional development.

Hadzhiyanev holds Master's degrees in Law, Business Administration, and Health Management. He is affiliated with GERB and is a member of the Municipal Council's Standing Committee on Education and Religious Affairs. He speaks English, Russian, and French.



**Hesse,
Matthias**

Matthias Hesse is Policy Advisor for Eastern Europe at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Berlin, where he coordinates projects and regional offices across Eastern and Southeastern Europe. His work focuses on political dialogue, regional cooperation, and European policy.

Since joining the foundation in 2022, he has held several positions related to Southeast Europe, the South Caucasus, and maritime security, including assignments in Tbilisi and Yerevan within the Regional Programme Political Dialogue South Caucasus.

Earlier in his career, Hesse worked with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the Council of Germans in Ukraine, focusing on development policy and international cooperation. He also completed an internship at the German Bundestag.

He holds a Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Bonn and a Bachelor's degree in European Studies from Osnabrück University.



**Hirschmann,
Christian**

Christian Hirschmann is CEO of Azurite Europe and Global Sales Director of the Azurite Group, with more than twenty years of experience in logistics and supply chain management. His expertise spans intra-logistics, production logistics, rail and multimodal transport, and international supply-chain operations, with a particular focus on Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle Corridor.

After working with major automotive suppliers between 2008 and 2016, he took over the family-owned logistics business founded in 1925 and expanded it into a multinational transport and logistics group with operations across Europe and Central Asia. Under his leadership, Azurite has strengthened its presence in intermodal logistics, rail freight, and sustainable transport solutions.

Hirschmann holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics with specialization in Purchasing and Logistics and a Master's degree in International Accounting and Taxation. His professional interests include supply-chain innovation, international logistics development, and strategic transport connectivity.



**Dr. Hoffmann,
Martin**

Martin Hoffmann is Director for Strategy and Research at the German Eastern Business Association (Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft), a position he has held since 2018. In this role, he works on strategic analysis, economic policy, and business relations between Germany and the countries of Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

His work focuses on geopolitical and economic developments, regional connectivity, trade cooperation, energy policy, and investment trends affecting German business engagement across the wider Eastern European region. He is involved in research, policy coordination, and dialogue between business leaders, governments, and international institutions.

At the Ost-Ausschuss, Hoffmann contributes to strategic initiatives related to European economic cooperation, infrastructure, industrial transformation, and the evolving economic environment in Central and Eastern Europe.



**Dr. Hofmann,
Stefan**

Dr. Stefan Hofmann is Head of the Romania Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, based in Bucharest, a position he has held since 2025. He has been part of the foundation for more than two decades, previously serving as Regional Director for Baden-Württemberg, Head of the Educational Centre in Oldenburg, and Country Representative in Guatemala. Earlier in his career he also worked on projects in Mexico for the foundation.

Alongside his work in political foundations, he is co-founder and senior adviser at Venturice GmbH, a company builder and consulting firm based in Stuttgart and Zurich.

Before joining the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Hofmann worked in journalism and communications, including as a news editor at the Kölnische Rundschau and editor of the business publication Spanien Ökonomie.

He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Hamburg, with research focused on party financing and political systems in Spain.



**Ilashchuk,
Olesya**

H. E. Olesya Ilashchuk is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the Republic of Bulgaria, appointed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in 2022 and accredited in Sofia in April 2023. As ambassador, she works on strengthening Ukrainian-Bulgarian relations and supporting international cooperation in the areas of humanitarian assistance, regional security, and European integration.

Before entering diplomacy, she worked in the private sector and in professional practice related to psychological counselling and public engagement. Her appointment attracted international attention as part of Ukraine's broader diplomatic renewal during the wartime period.

Ilashchuk graduated from Chernivtsi University in 2005 with a degree in history, political science, and international relations, specializing in geography. Her professional interests include international dialogue, humanitarian cooperation, and strengthening partnerships between Ukraine and European institutions and partners.



**Ivandjиков,
Todor**

Todor Ivandjиков is a Bulgarian entrepreneur and aviation expert, founder and CEO of International Aviation Services (IAS), established in 2005. Under his leadership, IAS became a major provider of CAMO services with international certifications including EASA, OTAR 39, and ISO 9001.

He has advised leading aviation companies and airlines including AerCap, DAE (AWAS), Wizz Air, and Vueling on aircraft management and operational standards.

Beyond aviation, Ivandjиков is an investor in technology, healthcare, recycling, and real estate ventures, including Software Group, AeroSight, Platform Aero, and Verum AD Clinics.

He is President of the Bulgarian Aviation Industry Association and serves on the boards of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Bulgarian Air Force Academy. He is also involved in the aviation cluster "Your Wings" ("Вашите криле"), supporting the development of Bulgaria's aviation sector.



**Kafkarides,
Haralambos**

H. E. Haralambos Kafkarides is Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to Bulgaria, a position he has held since December 2022. A career diplomat with extensive experience in European affairs, security policy, and international relations, he has served in senior diplomatic postings across Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East.

Before his appointment in Sofia, Ambassador Kafkarides was Director of Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, overseeing multilateral relations and security policy. Earlier in his career, he served as Ambassador of Cyprus to Brazil, with parallel accreditation to several Latin American countries, as well as Deputy High Commissioner in London and diplomat at the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the European Union in Brussels.

He has also worked extensively on EU affairs, Cyprus's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and regional diplomacy. Prior to joining the diplomatic service, he worked as a journalist and political analyst specializing in Turkish affairs.

Ambassador Kafkarides holds degrees in Turkish Studies and Area Studies from the University of Cyprus and SOAS University of London, and earned a PhD from the University of Cyprus focused on Turkish policy in Cyprus.



**Flotilla Admiral
Prof. Kalinov,
Kalin**

Flotilla Admiral Prof. Dr. Kalin Kalinov has served as Commandant of the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy in Varna since October 2024. A senior Bulgarian naval officer, academic, and military expert, his professional career combines operational naval command, military education, and scientific research.

A graduate of the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy, where he specialized in naval tactical formations, Kalinov began his career in the Bulgarian Navy serving aboard submarines in Varna, progressing through positions including navigator, combat unit commander, assistant commander, senior assistant commander, and commander of submarine Slava.

He later completed operational-tactical studies at the Rakovski National Defence College and earned a PhD in Armed Forces Organization and Management with research focused on operational planning in the Navy. Since 2003, he has combined military service with academic work, advancing from assistant professor to professor in naval and military sciences.

From 2011 to 2024, he served as Deputy Commandant for Academic and Research Affairs at the Naval Academy, contributing to the modernization of military education and research. In 2024, he was promoted to the rank of Flotilla Admiral and appointed head of Bulgaria's leading naval higher education institution.



**Ambassador Dr.
Merve Safa
Kavakci**

Dr. Merve Safa Kavakci has served as First Deputy Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation since 2023. A diplomat, academic, and public figure, her work focuses on international relations, regional cooperation, human rights, and intercultural dialogue.

Before joining BSEC, she served as Ambassador of Türkiye to Malaysia between 2018 and 2022. Earlier she was Director of the Postcolonial Studies Research Center at Üsküdar University and lectured in international relations at George Washington University and Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Kavakci was elected to the Turkish Parliament in 1999 as the country's first Muslim woman MP wearing a hijab. Following political restrictions imposed against her, she brought her case before the European Court of Human Rights and won in 2007. She has since become an internationally recognized advocate for human rights, religious freedom, and women's empowerment.

She holds a PhD in Political Science from Howard University, an MPA from Harvard University, and a degree in Software Engineering from the University of Texas at Dallas. She is the author of several books on politics, democracy, and international relations and has received numerous international distinctions for her public and academic work.



**Kessidis,
Vassilis**

Vassilis S. Kessidis is a political strategist, consultant, and PhD candidate in Strategy and Diplomacy at Panteion University in Athens. He currently serves as Commissioner on Foreign Affairs of the National Youth Council of Italy and is acting Secretary General of the Brussels-based think tank European Policy Innovation Council (EPIC).

Professionally active across Italy, Greece, and Brussels, Kessidis has experience in European institutions, political consultancy, and strategic communications. His work has included campaign and policy roles connected to European political initiatives, digital campaigning, and international outreach, including involvement in European Parliament and Spitzenkandidaten campaigns. He is also co-founder of EURODORICA Consulting, focusing on public relations, communication strategy, and international project development.

Kessidis studied Italian Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and completed postgraduate studies in International Relations and Strategic Studies at Panteion University as a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung scholar. His professional interests include European affairs, diplomacy, strategic communication, youth engagement, and international political cooperation.



**Kharebava,
Zviad**

Zviad Kharebava is Director for Infrastructure and Environment at Policy and Management Consulting Group (PMCG) in Tbilisi, Georgia, where he has worked since 2013 on infrastructure development, environmental policy, and strategic consulting projects across the region. His expertise focuses on engineering management, economic development, energy infrastructure, and public-sector reform.

Before joining PMCG, Kharebava held senior leadership positions in both government and the private sector. He served as Advisor to the Prime Minister of Georgia on Economic Issues and as Director of the Economic Policy Department at the Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, contributing to national economic and infrastructure policy during a period of major reforms.

His private-sector experience includes serving as Director General of Sakhydroenergomsheni INC and CEO positions at Kala Capital and Greenrights Georgia, where he worked on investment, energy, and infrastructure-related projects. Kharebava holds a PhD in Mathematics and a Master's degree in Economics from North Carolina State University. His professional interests include infrastructure policy, sustainable development, energy, economic modernization, and regional connectivity.



**Kimchev,
Stanislav**

Stanislav Kimchev is Deputy Mayor for Cultural Affairs of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad, a position he has held since 2024. Alongside his public role, he has more than seventeen years of experience in the media and television industry, specializing in international partnerships, media sales, and strategic communications.

Kimchev is one of the creators and Senior Vice President for Global Sales at CEETV, a leading B2B platform providing market intelligence and industry information for the television and media sector in Central and Eastern Europe. He also serves as Marketing Director of TVBIZZ Magazine, focusing on media development, content promotion, and international industry cooperation.

His professional background combines public administration, media management, and cultural policy, with a strong focus on innovation, international networking, and audience engagement.

Kimchev holds degrees in Film and Television Directing, International Relations, and Music Pedagogy from South-West University "Neofit Rilski" in Blagoevgrad. His professional interests include media development, cultural diplomacy, communications, and international cooperation in the creative industries.



**Dr. Krüsmann,
Valentin**

Dr. Valentin Krüsmann is a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) in Berlin, where he works on issues related to China's Belt and Road Initiative, infrastructure politics, connectivity corridors, and development finance in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. His research focuses particularly on the Middle Corridor, EU-China relations, and China's role in Central Asia's energy transition.

Before completing his PhD at Freie Universität Berlin and ZOiS, he worked with the China desk of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Beijing, and a China-focused consultancy in Berlin.

Krüsmann has contributed to international research and publications on connectivity, governance, and infrastructure development in Eurasia, including studies on Georgia, the South Caucasus, and authoritarian dimensions of large-scale infrastructure projects. He has also led research delegations focused on Moldova and the Transnistria region.

He studied economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business and Yonsei University in Seoul, and holds a Master's degree in Development Studies from SOAS University of London. He speaks German, English, and Chinese.



**Kuzucu,
Seda**

Ms. Seda Kuzucu serves as UNHCR Representative in Bulgaria, a position she has held since November 2022. With more than three decades of experience at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), she has worked extensively in refugee protection, emergency response, resettlement policy, and humanitarian coordination across Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Throughout her career, Kuzucu has held senior positions in UNHCR operations in Türkiye, Kenya, Thailand, China, Serbia, Slovakia, and at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva. Her work has included emergency responses related to displacement crises in regions such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Ukraine.

Before her appointment in Bulgaria, she served as Senior Emergency Coordinator within UNHCR's Division of Emergency, Security, and Supply in Geneva. Earlier, she also led the reopening of UNHCR's office in Slovakia following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

Her professional expertise focuses on refugee protection, humanitarian response, resettlement policy, emergency coordination, and international cooperation in displacement and migration issues.



**Maneva,
Manuela**

Manuela Maneva is the founder of Tripco, a Bulgarian startup focused on improving public transport through digital solutions and better accessibility. Since founding the company in 2023, she has worked on developing integrated transport information, online ticketing systems, and mobility solutions aimed at improving connectivity and sustainable urban travel in Bulgaria.

Her work is driven by a strong commitment to modernizing public transportation and encouraging more sustainable alternatives to private car use, particularly in underserved regions and smaller communities.

Before launching Tripco, Maneva built and managed Versailles Cleaning Ltd in London for more than a decade, gaining extensive entrepreneurial and operational experience. She holds a diploma in Business, Management, and Marketing from Mont Rose College in London. Her professional interests include mobility innovation, sustainable transport, and technology-driven public services.



**Manolov,
Svetlomisr**

Svetlomisr Manolov is Principal Banker at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in Sofia, where he has worked since 2018 on financing and investment projects focused on infrastructure, urban development, and private-sector growth. His work includes structuring complex financial transactions, supporting sustainable investment initiatives, and advising on strategic development projects in Bulgaria and the region.

Before joining the EBRD, Manolov held senior banking and investment positions at Société Générale Expressbank, Bulgarian Development Bank, Interlease, and Bulgarian American Credit Bank. Throughout his career, he has specialized in project finance, structured finance, SME investment, and EU-funded development programmes, including projects under the JESSICA urban development initiative.

He has extensive experience in financial analysis, investment structuring, portfolio management, and risk assessment, having managed large corporate and SME portfolios with significant regional exposure.

Manolov holds degrees in International Economic Relations and International Project Management from the University of National and World Economy in Sofia. His professional interests focus on sustainable finance, infrastructure investment, urban development, and economic growth initiatives.



**Marinov,
Radoslav**

Radoslav Marinov is Chief Marketing Officer of Top Rent A Car and Head of Development at TopMobility, where he works on sustainable and technology-driven mobility solutions in Bulgaria. His work focuses on strategic growth, shared mobility, and innovative urban transport services.

At TopMobility, he leads projects related to integrated mobility platforms and shared electric transport solutions aimed at improving urban accessibility and sustainable travel. Within Top Rent A Car, he has held several positions including

Manager of Strategic Partnerships, contributing to the company's expansion and business development.

Earlier in his career, he co-founded RE3D Bulgaria, a student startup producing 3D-printing filament from recycled materials, recognized in youth entrepreneurship competitions.

Marinov holds a degree in Management from the University of Manchester. His professional interests include mobility innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainable transport, and emerging technologies.



**Miekley,
Sonja**

Sonja Miekley is General Manager of the German-Bulgarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Sofia, a position she has held since 2024. Her work focuses on strengthening German-Bulgarian economic relations, supporting bilateral investment, and developing partnerships between businesses and institutions in both countries.

Before moving to Bulgaria, she served from 2019 to 2024 at the German-Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Cairo as Co-CEO and Regional Spokesperson for the network of German Chambers Abroad in North Africa and the Middle East. Earlier, she participated in the DIHK Talent@AHK programme for the development of young leaders in international trade.

Between 2014 and 2019 she worked at the German-Tunisian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, managing projects related to investment policy, economic cooperation, and international trade fairs. Earlier in her career she held positions at Bayern International and Baden-Württemberg International, organizing international delegations, market development initiatives, and state visits, and also served as Project Manager at the German-Bulgarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce between 2006 and 2008.

Her professional focus has been on international economic cooperation, trade promotion, industrial partnerships, and investment development across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.



**Milo,
Inid**

H. E. Inid Milo is Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to Bulgaria, a position she has held since 2023. A career diplomat with more than two decades of experience in international affairs, her work focuses on regional cooperation, public diplomacy, Euro-Atlantic relations, and security policy.

Before her appointment to Sofia, she served as Director of the Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Department at the Albanian Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and headed the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship Task Force 2020 and the Partners for Co-operation Groups. Earlier, she was Director of NATO and Security Policies at the ministry.

Her diplomatic career also includes postings at the Albanian Embassy in Berlin, the Albanian Delegation to NATO, and the Permanent Mission of Albania to the United Nations in Geneva, where she worked on political affairs, human rights, and humanitarian issues.

Milo holds a degree in Political Science, History, and Journalism from the University of Vienna. Her professional interests include international security, regional cooperation, and multilateral relations in Southeast Europe.



**Minev,
Georgi**

Dr. Georgi Minev is a media professional, journalist, and academic specializing in digital publishing, business media, and multimedia content creation. Since 2014, he has served as Editor-in-Chief of Money.bg, where he led the platform's transformation into one of Bulgaria's leading digital business media outlets through audience growth, multimedia strategy, and cross-platform content development.

Alongside his media career, Minev is Assistant Professor at the University of National and World Economy, where he lectures in communication and media studies. He is also a television host at Bulgaria ON AIR and has contributed to publications including Forbes Bulgaria, Banker, and Economedia.

Earlier in his career, he gained international media experience through internships and research positions at Deutsche Welle, BILD, WeltN24, and the German Bundestag in Berlin.

Minev holds a PhD in Communication and Media Studies from the University of National and World Economy, a Master's degree in Political Management from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," and completed academic exchange studies at Humboldt University of Berlin. His professional interests focus on digital media, business journalism, political communication, and multimedia storytelling.



**Nikolov,
Tsvetomir**

Tsvetomir Nikolov is an analyst at the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) in Sofia, where he works within the Energy and Climate and Geoeconomics programmes. His research focuses on energy security, the energy transition, market regulation, and the geopolitical dimensions of European energy policy, including sanctions circumvention and the influence of authoritarian actors in strategic sectors.

At CSD, Nikolov contributes to policy analysis on decarbonisation, energy market reform, and infrastructure resilience, with a focus on aligning Europe's energy transformation with economic sustainability and institutional security. He is also founder of the educational platform EnergyLearn, dedicated to presenting complex topics related to energy and the green transition in an accessible way.

Alongside his analytical work, he serves as Executive Co-Chairman of "Bulgaria of the Young," a youth-oriented think tank focused on education, public policy, and civic participation. Earlier in his career, he completed internships at the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Institute for Market Economics, and legal consultancy firms specializing in public procurement and EU-funded projects.

Nikolov holds a Master's degree in Law from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". His professional interests include energy governance, EU policy, sustainable development, and economic resilience.



**Nikolova,
Simona**

Simona N. is a young media and political communication professional currently working as Digital Editor at Euronews Bulgaria. Her work focuses on digital journalism, political and international affairs coverage, and multimedia content production.

She previously completed the International Parliamentary Scholarship (IPS) programme of the German Bundestag in Berlin, where she gained experience in parliamentary processes, political communication, and international exchange. Earlier, she also worked with Alpha Research and the Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute, contributing to research, policy, and diplomatic initiatives.

Simona holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and recently completed her Master's degree in Political Sociology at the same university. Her professional interests include political communication, media, international relations, and public policy.



**Pellmar,
Jason**

Jason Pellmar is World Bank Group Country Manager for Bulgaria, a position he has held since 2025. In this role, he oversees the institution's operations and partnerships in the country, focusing on economic development, infrastructure, investment, innovation, and sustainable growth initiatives.

Before moving to Bulgaria, he worked at the International Finance Corporation (IFC) for more than fifteen years, holding senior leadership positions across Europe and Asia. His previous roles include Regional Manager for Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, where he led investment and advisory operations worth several billion dollars, supporting private-sector development, energy projects, financial markets, and infrastructure modernization. He also held senior positions in India, Myanmar, and Türkiye focused on infrastructure finance and strategic investment.

Earlier in his career, Pellmar worked at GE Energy Financial Services and the investment advisory firm Taylor-DeJongh, specializing in infrastructure, project finance, and energy-sector investments. Throughout his career, he has worked extensively on public-private partnerships, sustainable infrastructure, and economic resilience in emerging markets.

He holds a Master's degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), was a Fulbright Scholar at Saint Petersburg State University, and graduated from Wesleyan University.



**Plevneliev,
Rosen**

Rosen Plevneliev served as President of Bulgaria between 2012 and 2017. Before entering politics, he built a successful career as an entrepreneur, project manager, and investor in the fields of construction, real estate, and technology.

A graduate of the Technical University of Sofia with a specialization in computer science, Plevneliev won Bulgaria's National Computer Programming Competition in 1982. As co-founder and CEO of Iris International, he managed and implemented more than eighty construction projects in Germany, including projects related to Commerzbank Frankfurt, Munich Airport, the Reichstag, and the Federal Chancellery in Berlin.

He entered public office in 2009 as Minister of Regional Development and Public Works before being elected President of Bulgaria. During his presidency, he promoted long-term strategic planning, digital transformation, innovation, connectivity, energy diversification, and modernization policies. He also initiated the National Development Programme Bulgaria 2020 and the Bulgaria 2030 debate, while establishing the Presidential Council and Presidential Library.

Plevneliev's professional interests focus on innovation, digital governance, infrastructure development, education reform, and European integration.



**Dr. Riemer,
Sonja**

Dr. Sonja Riemer is Head of the Economic Division at the German Embassy in Sofia, a position she has held since 2025. In this role, she works on economic cooperation, bilateral relations, and policy dialogue between Germany and Bulgaria.

Before moving to Sofia, she served at the German Federal Foreign Office as Coordinator for Democracy and Rule of Law Promotion. Earlier she held diplomatic and policy positions related to sustainable development and international cooperation, including service at the German Embassy in Moscow.

Earlier in her career, Riemer worked with organizations focused on international cooperation and sustainable development in Berlin and completed internships at the Federal Foreign Office and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

She holds a PhD in Political Science from Osnabrück University and a diploma in Political Science from Freie Universität Berlin. She also studied political science at Duke University in the United States.



**Dr. Schmidt,
Ina**

Dr. Ina Schmidt is a consultant anesthetist, intensivist, emergency and flight physician with more than seventeen years of international experience in aeromedical medicine and critical care transport. She is founder and president of ICARUS, a non-profit association dedicated to advancing research, education, patient safety, and professional standards in aeromedical transport medicine.

Her professional work combines clinical expertise in anesthesiology, intensive care, emergency medicine, and flight medicine with operational experience in international patient transport and aeromedical coordination. She works actively to promote evidence-based practices, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the development of best-practice frameworks within the field of transport medicine.

Through ICARUS, Dr. Schmidt leads and supports international research, training, and educational initiatives aimed at improving the quality and safety of aeromedical services. She also collaborates with experts and organizations worldwide to encourage innovation, knowledge exchange, and the advancement of aeromedical science and practice.

She studied Human Medicine at the University of Bonn. Her professional interests include critical care transport, aviation medicine, emergency response systems, medical education, and the future development of aeromedical care and patient safety standards.



**Shekerletov,
Daniel**

Daniel Shekerletov is Second Secretary for Transport, Intermodal Questions, and Networks at the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the European Union in Brussels. His work focuses on European transport policy, connectivity, infrastructure networks, and intermodal mobility within the framework of EU institutions and initiatives.

Before joining the Permanent Representation in 2018, he developed academic and policy interests in European affairs, regional development, and international cooperation. He was also a scholar of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, supporting his work and studies in political and European policy fields.

Shekerletov holds a Master's degree in Geography from Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen in Germany and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". His professional interests include European transport policy, regional connectivity, and strategic infrastructure development.



**Stankov,
Zhecho**

Zhecho Stankov is Minister of Energy of Bulgaria since January 2025. An economist and energy policy expert, he has extensive experience in the fields of energy development, renewable energy, infrastructure, and strategic energy planning.

He graduated in Economics from the University of Regensburg in Germany and is recognized as one of Bulgaria's leading specialists in energy policy and governance. Between 2015 and 2021, he served as Deputy Minister of Energy, where he worked on projects related to energy security, market liberalization, infrastructure modernization, and alignment with European energy policies.

Stankov also served as Chairman of the Bulgarian Energy Holding, contributing to the development of major national energy initiatives and long-term strategic projects. Since 2021, he has been a Member of the Bulgarian Parliament representing the Burgas region from GERB, actively participating in legislative work related to finance, infrastructure, and energy policy.

In the 51st National Assembly, he served as a member of the Budget and Finance Committee. His professional interests focus on energy independence, sustainable energy development, innovation, and regional connectivity.



**Stoeva,
Rositsa**

Rositsa Stoeva is Ambassador-at-Large for Strategic Relations in Southeast Europe and the wider Black Sea region at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria. A career diplomat with extensive experience in regional cooperation and international relations, she previously served as Executive Manager at the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) in Istanbul between 2017 and 2024. There, she managed international projects related to blue economy, environmental protection, innovation, youth entrepreneurship, and Black Sea cooperation.

Her diplomatic career includes senior positions within the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Head of the Regional Cooperation Department and Head of the Development Cooperation Department, as well as postings in North Macedonia and Türkiye. Her work has focused on regional diplomacy, development policy, Black Sea cooperation, and Southeast European relations.

Stoeva holds degrees in Political Science and Armenian Studies from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and a Master’s degree in Sustainable Blue Economy from the University of Trieste.



**Stoilova,
Zlatozara**

Zlatozara Stoilova is a Project Manager at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Bulgaria and Project Coordinator of the Burgas Connectivity Forum. Born in Varna on 8 April 1991, she holds a Master’s degree in Marketing Management from ESADE Business School and completed a specialization in International Negotiation and Business Communication at the University of Vienna. She also earned a diploma through the

Global Advancement Programme – Business and Finance at the United Nations Youth and Students Association of Austria (AFA).

Her professional experience spans Austria, Bulgaria, Spain, and Belgium, with a focus on project management, international cooperation and sales. She has volunteered with Associació 50a50 in Barcelona and contributed to the “Termómetro Violeta” initiative promoting gender equality.

At the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, she leads projects dedicated to female empowerment in politics and diplomacy. Her interests include EU programmes, international cooperation, local governance, and connectivity in Southeast Europe.



**Tchakarova,
Maria**

Maria Tchakarova is Project Manager for Communications and Partnerships at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Bulgaria, where she leads projects in political communication, international relations, and German-Bulgarian cooperation. Her work includes building expert and institutional networks, managing scholarship programmes, and coordinating youth initiatives and international dialogue platforms.

Previously, she served as Scientific Associate at the foundation between 2019 and 2024, focusing on political analysis, project development, policy events, and international delegations. Earlier professional experience includes work with Lidl Bulgaria, the Municipality of Regensburg, and the University of Regensburg, as well as internships at the German Bundestag through the International Parliamentary Scholarship programme, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Embassy of Bulgaria in Germany.

Tchakarova holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Comparative Cultural Studies from the University of Regensburg and an MBA from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She is also certified in PRINCE2® and Professional Scrum methodologies.

Alongside her institutional work, she is founder of "The Face of Sofia" ("Ликът на София"), an initiative dedicated to presenting the people, communities, and events that shape the identity of Sofia through art, contemporary technologies like AI, and civic engagement.



**Tchakarova,
Velina**

Velina Tchakarova is a geopolitical strategist and founder of FACE — For A Conscious Experience, a strategic advisory platform focused on geopolitics, geoeconomics, and strategic foresight. With more than twenty-five years of professional and academic experience in security, defense, and international affairs, she advises corporations, institutions, and policymakers on geopolitical risk, global transformation, and the evolving international order.

Before founding FACE, she served as Director of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES) in Vienna, where she specialized in global system transformation and Europe's role in Eastern Europe. She has also worked as an instructor at the Real World Risk Institute and participates in several international advisory and expert networks focused on security, economic resilience, and global strategy.

Tchakarova studied Political Science and South Asian Studies at Heidelberg University and is pursuing doctoral research at the University of Vienna focused on geopolitical competition in Eastern Europe. Her professional interests include geopolitical competition, economic security, strategic foresight, and the rise of middle powers in global politics.



**Dr. Troulis,
Markos**

Dr. Markos Troulis is a political scientist and lecturer affiliated with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, specializing in international relations, geopolitics, strategic studies, and Turkish foreign policy. His academic work focuses on Eastern Mediterranean security, EU-Turkey relations, energy geopolitics, and systemic geopolitical analysis.

He teaches courses related to international relations theory, geopolitics, and Turkey's foreign policy at the Department of Turkish and Modern Asian Studies of the University of Athens. His research has been published in international academic journals and focuses on regional security dynamics, strategic competition, and geopolitical developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East.

Dr. Troulis completed postgraduate studies at the London School of Economics and earned his PhD at the University of Piraeus. He has also conducted research at institutions including the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA) in Israel.



**Yanev,
Martin**

Martin Yanev is a transport and logistics engineer with more than fifteen years of experience in freight forwarding, rail modernization, and international logistics. He currently serves as Vice Chairman of the Green Transport Cluster, is a member of the Management Board of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where he works on sustainable transport, innovation, and logistics development initiatives and a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Fellow.

Throughout his career, Yanev has held senior leadership positions in logistics and transport companies, including VOLO, Discordia, and TARAN Ltd. He is also an independent expert for the European Shift2Rail initiative and co-founder of the mobility and logistics platform Tranzinno.

Recognized for his contribution to the sector, he received the "Logistics Manager of the Year 2020/2021" distinction and was included in the regional "40 under 40" ranking for Eastern Europe. His professional interests focus on green transport, rail innovation, intermodal logistics, and strategic infrastructure development.

Yanev holds engineering degrees in industrial management, mechanical engineering, and transport management, a Master's degree in Logistics of Security and Defence from the Rakovski National Defence College, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Transport Economics and Management.



**Yordanova,
Ekaterina**

Ekaterina Yordanova is a senior municipal councillor in the Sofia Municipal Council representing the GERB-UDF coalition. She currently serves as Chair of the Committee on International Cooperation and Tourism, European Programs and Projects, and is a member of the Committees on Finance and Budget and on Children, Youth, and Sport.

Yordanova has served multiple consecutive mandates in the Sofia Municipal Council since 2007, focusing on international city cooperation, European programmes, civic engagement, and urban development initiatives. She is also Chairperson of the Board of the Sofia Development Association, where she supports projects related to innovation, entrepreneurship, green policies, and workforce development.

Her professional interests include international cooperation, urban policy, tourism development, and the implementation of European-funded programmes at the municipal level.

She holds a Master's degree in International Relations.



**Zaharieva,
Ekaterina**

Ekaterina Zaharieva is European Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation. A lawyer and senior Bulgarian politician, she has held a number of key government positions related to foreign affairs, justice, regional development, and European policy.

She served as Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria from 2017 to 2021 and previously during the caretaker governments of 2013–2014. Between 2017 and 2021 she was Minister of Foreign Affairs, leading Bulgaria's diplomatic agenda and international cooperation efforts. Earlier she served as Minister of Justice and twice as Minister of Regional Development and Public Works.

Zaharieva also served as Chief of Staff to President Rosen Plevneliev and was a Member of the Bulgarian National Assembly between 2021 and 2024.

She holds a degree in law and has built her career around public administration, European integration, diplomacy, and institutional reform.



**Zlateva,
Radostina**

Radostina Zlateva is Senior Route Development Expert at Fraport Bulgaria, where she works on aviation marketing, airline partnerships, and the development of new air routes for Varna and Burgas airports. Her work focuses on route development strategies, tourism connectivity, and strengthening Bulgaria's position as a regional travel destination.

She joined Fraport Bulgaria in 2021 in the field of Aviation Marketing and Route Development, progressing to her current senior role in 2025. Earlier in her career, she spent more than a decade in the tourism and hospitality sector, including managerial positions at Club Magellan, Hotel Orchidea, and Manor of Groves Golf and Country Club in the United Kingdom.

Zlateva holds degrees in Marketing and Tourism from the University of Economics – Varna. Her professional interests include aviation development, tourism strategy, destination marketing, and international travel connectivity.

The Burgas Connectivity Forum 2026 is held with the support of:



AZURITE



Media Partners:



БГ позитив