

## Azerbaijan and Georgia seek to accelerate construction of a Black Sea power line

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Azerbaijan and Georgia are asking the European Commission to grant special status to a Black Sea power line project that would expedite construction of an undersea cable enabling EU member states to import electricity from Caspian Basin nations.

Azerbaijani Energy Minister Parviz Shabazov announced March 10 that top energy officials from four states – Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania and Hungary – have sent a letter to EU Energy Commissioner Dan Jorgensen seeking to obtain Project of Mutual Interest (PMI) status for the “Black Sea Energy” project. The four nations first came up with the idea in 2022. Bulgaria has also expressed interest in participating.

Energy infrastructure projects with PMI status involve collaboration between non-EU states and at least two EU members. PMI projects must meet EU energy and decarbonization targets, as well as demonstrate a reliable “security of supply” and provide overall “socio-economic benefit” for the EU.

PMIs benefit from “faster planning and permit approvals and increased visibility to investors,” according to the European Commission’s website. A decision on whether the Black Sea project is approved for PMI status could come as early as late March.

The project is estimated to cost 3.5 billion euros and take up to four years to complete. The European Commission has indicated that it could contribute up to two-thirds of the construction costs, according to Azerbaijani media reports.

The Black Sea power line would be capable of transmitting up to 4 Gigawatts of electricity annually, a significant portion of which would be generated from renewable sources. Azerbaijan in 2024 launched a major infrastructure drive to develop domestic “green” energy capacity, and has set an ambitious target of generating 30 percent of the country’s domestic electricity needs via solar and wind sources by 2030.

In addition, Baku is working with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on a Caspian Sea power line project that could be potentially integrated with the Black Sea cable to facilitate the export of “green” electricity from Central Asia to the EU.