



Call for Essays: BSWN 2026 Student Competition

Call for Essays: Voices of the Next Generation on Black Sea Nuclear Security

Introduction and Purpose

The Black Sea Women in Nuclear Network (BSWN) is proud to announce the 2026 Student Essay Competition as part of its Annual Regional Conference “The Nuclear Workforce: Building Security, Driving Progress” in Sofia, Bulgaria (April 28-30, 2026). As we are seeking to elevate the voices of the next generation of scholars and practitioners, we invite students to submit original, critical essays addressing the pressing challenges of nuclear security, nonproliferation policy, and the implications of emerging technologies within the evolving landscape of nuclear energy within the Black Sea region. This competition aims to foster new ideas and provide a platform for emerging talent to present their perspectives to established experts in the field.

Eligibility Requirements: This competition is open **exclusively to citizens of BSWN member countries, specifically Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Türkiye, and Ukraine**. Applicants must be currently enrolled as students at a recognized university (Undergraduate, Master’s, or PhD level) or have graduated recently (in the past 2 years), at the time of submission.

Competition Topics: We are looking for essays that demonstrate deep critical thinking on the future of the nuclear landscape in our region. Submissions should focus on one of three key areas:

1. **Nuclear Security and Non-Proliferation** - which covers threats to nuclear facilities, illicit trafficking, and regional security architectures.
2. **Regional Nuclear Energy Developments** - exploring the role of nuclear energy in ensuring strategic autonomy and stability for Black Sea nations.
3. **Emerging Technologies** – explore opportunities and vulnerabilities of AI and machine learning, digitalization of nuclear facilities, unmanned and autonomous systems, SMRs, etc.

Submission Guidelines: Essays must be written in English and must not exceed 1,000 words, excluding references. The submission should be sent as a PDF file to ensure formatting is preserved. To ensure a fair and blind judging process, do not include your name or personal details within the essay document itself. Your name and contact information should be included only in the body of the submission email.

Policy on Artificial Intelligence: We value human intellect and original argumentation above all else. The use of Generative AI tools to draft, write, or edit any part of the essay is strictly prohibited. The judges will evaluate submissions based on the novelty and depth of the ideas



presented. Please note that where there is a reasonable doubt regarding the use of AI, the submission will be disqualified. There will be no appeal process for disqualified entries. We urge you to trust your own voice and perspective.

Awards and Incentives: The authors of the top three essays will receive a full travel grant to attend the 2026 BSWN Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. This grant covers flight and accommodation expenses. Winners will have the honor of presenting their papers in person during a dedicated session at the conference.

Timeline and Deadlines: The deadline for all submissions is **25 March 2026**. The review process will take place throughout the last week of March, and qualified candidates will be asked to take a 10 minutes of interview. This schedule allows ample time for the winners to arrange travel to Sofia for the conference in the end of April.

How to Submit: Please send your CV, PDF essay and proof of student status to bswn@bswn.org as a single file.

Ensure the subject line reads "BSWN 2026 Essay Submission - [Your Last Name]".