

Rail Freight Transport

The impact of COVID-19 on volumes appears to be negligible until the end of the month of April

International passenger traffic is suspended in all of WB6 due to the closure of borders. At national level, passenger traffic is significantly reduced due to the national measures taken by national authorities.

Passenger traffic has been re-established in Serbia from 4th May, but not in full capacity. In North Macedonia and Kosovo* passenger traffic will resume in the second part of May, while in Montenegro from 1st June.

At the same time, rail freight operations are performed at almost the same level as before the COVID-19 crises.

Railway undertakings and Infrastructure managers are able to offer safe cross-border cargo connections for large volumes of goods using minimal human resources. However, in order to fulfil this vital function, it would be essential that train drivers are excluded from the imposed measures/restrictions and allowed to cross borders in order to pick up and deliver freight trains smoothly.

For all services, specific protocols have also been activated for the sanitisation of facilities, workplaces and spaces dedicated to customer service, always in compliance with the indications of the competent authorities.

The second important thing for sustainability of freight transport, in current conditions, is availability of the border crossings.

In Western Balkans (WB6) there are seven BCPs with EU MS (open 24 hours) and five BCPs intra-WB6.

	HR	HU	RO	BG	GR	ALB	BIH	MK	KOS	MNE	SRB
Albania										Tuzi	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1. B.Samac/S.Samac 2. Capljina /Metkovic										Brasina/Zvornik**
North Macedonia					Gevgeli a/Idomeni				Hani Elezit/ Blace		Tabanovci
Kosovo*								Hani Elezit/ Blace			
Montenegro						Tuzi					Vrbnica/ Bijelo Polje
Serbia	Sid/ Tovarnik	Subotica	Vrsac	Dimitrovgrad/K alotina			Brasina/ Zvornik**	Tabanovci		Vrbnica/ Bijelo Polje	

Figure 1. Overview of border crossings that are open 24h for rail freight operation

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

**All BCPs are open 00-24, with exception of Brasina/Zvornik (SRB/BIH) where the working time is 07.00-19.00



Figure 2. Border crossings open 24 hours for rail freight operation

It is important to mention that there is no major difference related to the waiting times on borders compared to the pre-COVID-19 period.

Freight traffic volume for the period January-April 2019 and for the same period 2020

RP	Tons		Net ton-kilometres (NTKM)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
SER	3854400	3565805	838900000	768900000
ALB	21664	20919	n/a	n/a
MNE	317485	354486	37649166	38144563
MK	653459	651054	122026627	123401924
KOS	358869	403632	8724207	8160146
BIH	4660354	3882433	425594808	346332145
TOTAL	9866231	8878330	1432894808	1284938778

Figure 3. Freight transport in the WB region in March 2019 and 2020

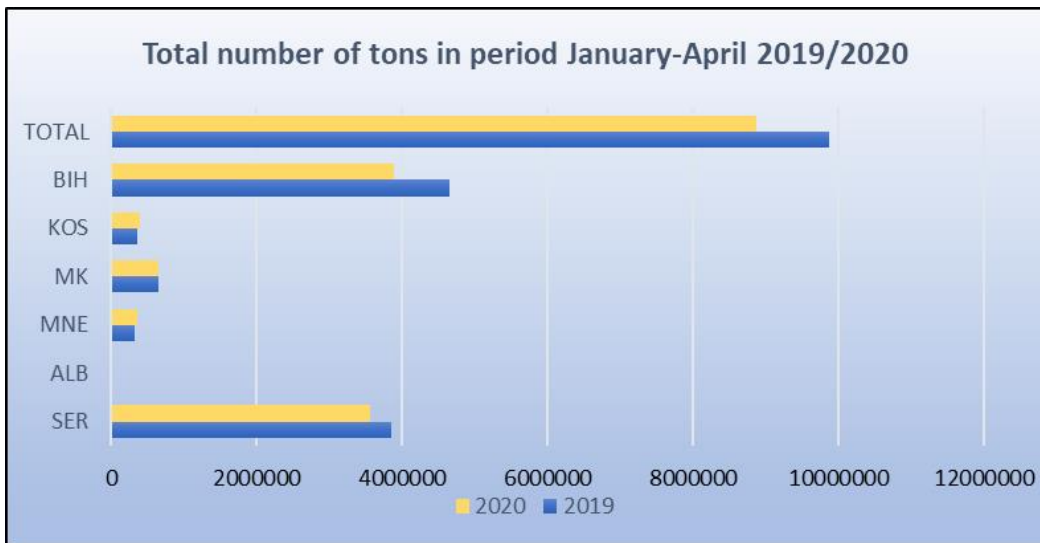


Figure 4. Freight transport in the WB region in tons in 2019 and 2020

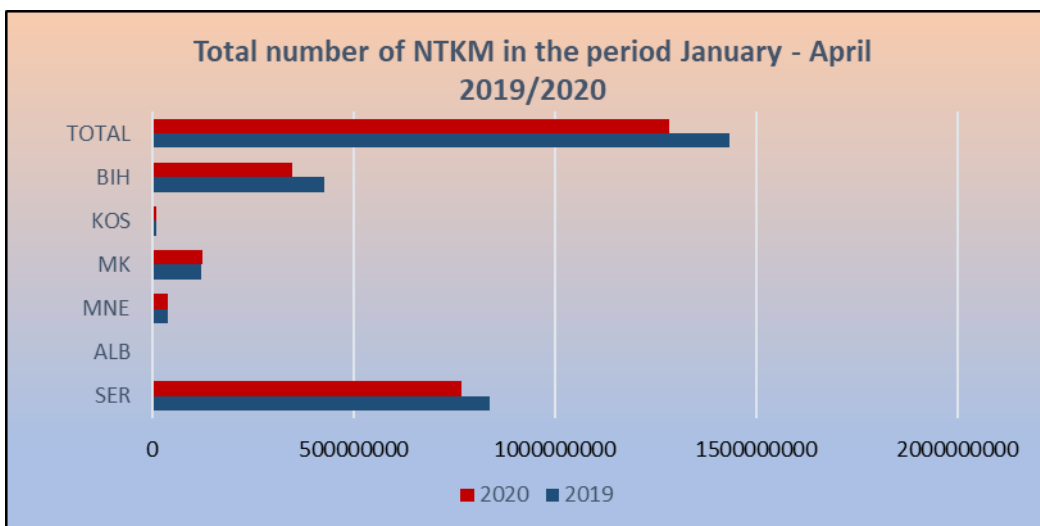


Figure 5. Freight transport in the WB region in Net ton-kilometres (NTKM) in 2019 and 2020

The first impression, looking at the figures (based on available data), is that there are no significant differences in freight operation when comparing the first four months of 2020 and same period in 2019. However, there is a 10% decline in freight transport at the regional level.

Montenegro

Passenger traffic will be re-established from the 1st June.

BCP MNE-SRB (Bijelo Polje), as well as BCP in joint railway station Tuzi (MNE/ALB), are open 24h and fully operational.

Transport volume in the first four months of 2020 is on same level as it was in 2019. Around 30% of the traffic is international (over two BCPs), while 70% is domestic transport (mainly trains with goods for export) from Niksic to Port of Bar.

Freight in tons		Freight in Net ton-kilometers		Number of trains	
April 2019	April 2020	April 2019	April 2020	April 2019	April 2020
104927	74486	12.181.666	8.399.563	142	85

Figure 6. Freight transport in MNE for April 2019/2020

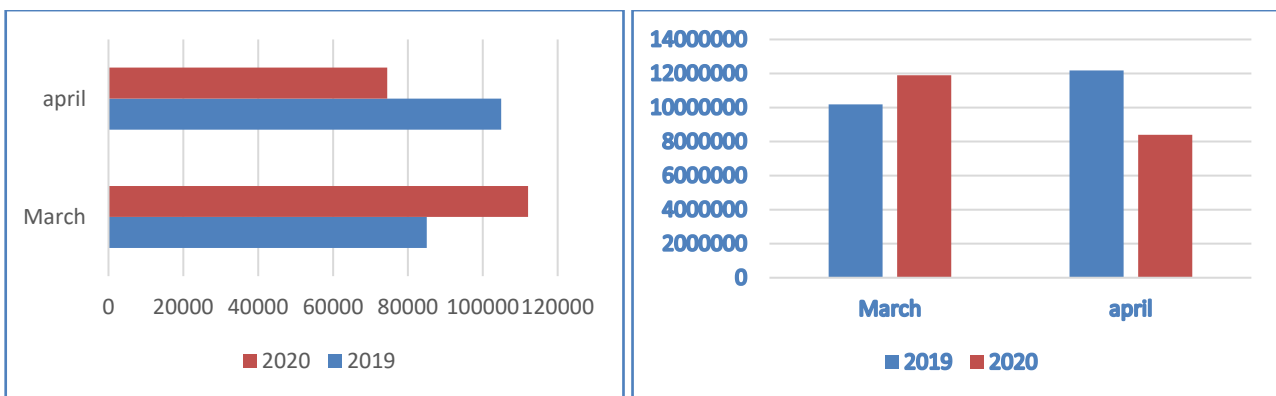


Figure 7. Transport volume in tons and net ton-kilometers (NTKM), during March and April 2019 and 2020

It is noticeable that freight transport has increased by 31,8 % in tons, while the number of NTKM has increased by 16,8 % and the number of freight trains has increased by 37,5% in March 2020.

There is a decline of about 35% in April 2020 compared to April 2019.

4% of the total transport in April 2020 passed through the Tuzi border crossing with Albania. 26% of the total rail transport in April 2020 passed over the border crossing Bijelo Polje (with Serbia) and the rest was export of goods from Montenegro via Port of Bar.

Serbia

Passenger traffic has been re-established (with the exception of urban and suburban traffic), in a reduced volume, on 4th May 2020, while the normalization in terms of the number of trains for all lines is expected in the following period. The exact list of trains for each line, as well as the timetable (available in Serbian language only), can be found on the [website of JSC 'Srbija Voz'](#). Urban and suburban traffic started operating since the morning of 8th May 2020.

All necessary precaution measures have been taken and passengers in trains are obliged to wear a protective mask and gloves, to respect markings on/in trains (spots for entrance, moving around in the train and exiting) and respect social distancing, while trains are being disinfected. Re-establishment of domestic passenger railway traffic has been enabled by the Decision of the Government of RS on the reduction of measures prohibiting the operation of public passenger transport during the state of emergency ('Official Gazette of RS', no 63/2020 from 30.4.2020). In order to protect the health of passengers and employees, traffic is organized in accordance with the measures prescribed by the Instruction of the Crisis Task Force for the Suppression of Infectious Diseases COVID-19, 08 number 53-3455/2020-01 from 28.04.2020. (Instruction for organizing public urban, suburban and

local transport in the application of measures for prevention, control of the spread and reducing the risk of disease COVID-19).

Decision of the Government of RS: <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/odluka-o-ublazavanju-mera-zabrane-obavljanja-javnog-prevoza-putnika.html>

Instruction of the Crisis Task Force for the Suppression of Infectious Diseases COVID-19: <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/Instrukcija-javni-gradskiprigradski-i-lokalni-prevoz.pdf?script=lat>

Transport of freight is functioning normally, all mayor BCPs are available and fully functional 24 hours. Still, railway traffic is closed on Mokra Gora, Sremska Raca (SER/BIH) and Bogojevo (SER/HR) border crossing stations, which has minor impact on freight traffic.

By comparing data about the exchanged number of trains on borders crossing for January - April 2020 with the same months last year, it can be concluded that there was only a slight decline at Sid (SRB/HR), and Subotica (SRB/HU), while a slight rise was noticed at Dimitrovgrad (SRB/BG) and Presevo (SRB/MK).

Regarding the volumes on the whole network, cargo activity of the railway undertakings is more or less at the same levels compared to the first quarter of 2019.

The number of freight trains on border crossings, in the table below, shows the monthly number of trains exchanged on all border crossing in the period January - April 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

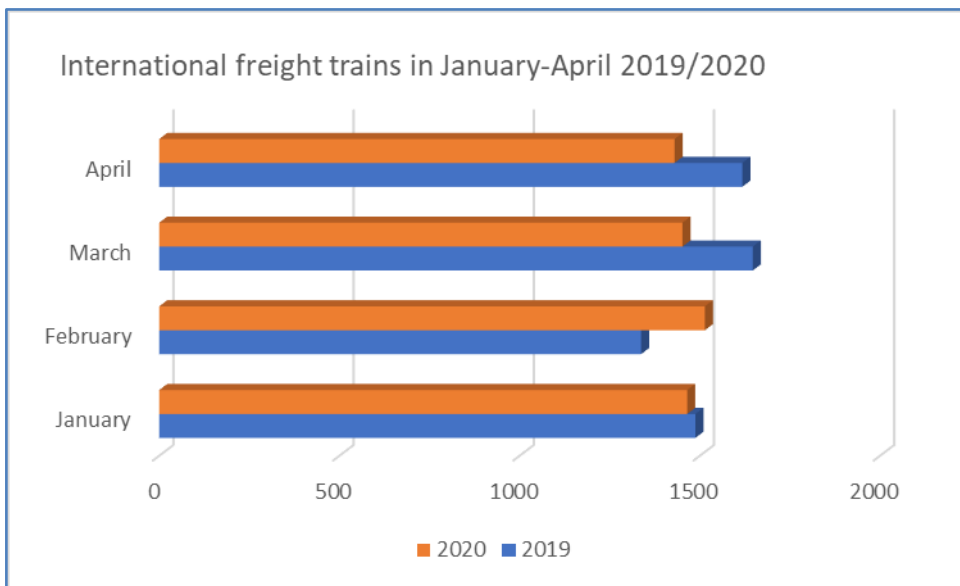


Figure 8. Total number of trains on border crossings in Serbia

	Tons (000)		NTKM (mil)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
January	891	760.2	224	185.8
February	841	828.7	186	209.4
March	886	747.2	211	197.1
April	888	780.4	217	194.3
Total	3507	3117	839	787

Figure 9. Transport volume in the first four months 2019 and 2020

Around 25% is domestic transport, while 75% is international (transit, export and import).

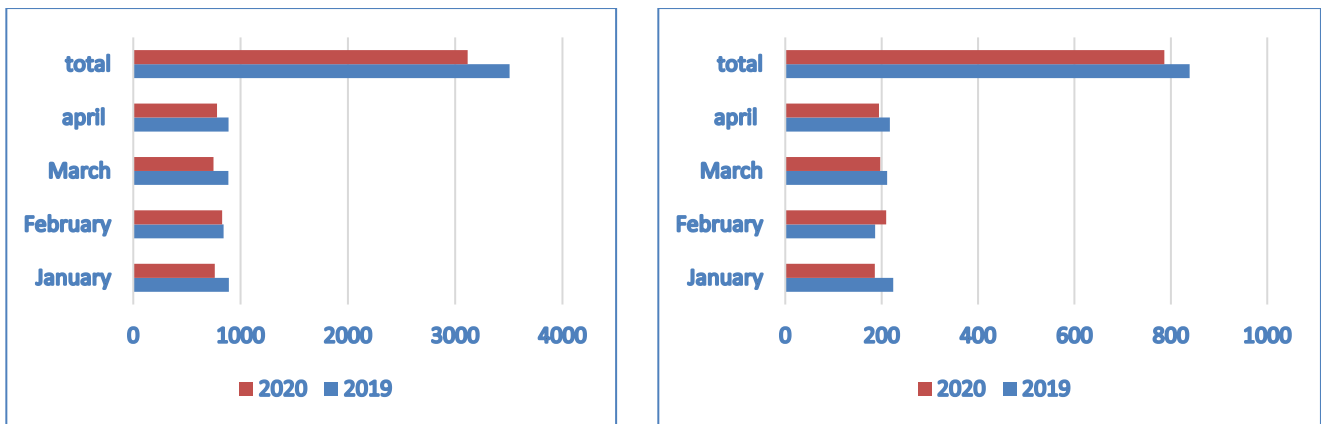


Figure 10. Transport volumes in Serbia in Tons (000) and NTKM (000000) in the first quarter of 2019 and 2020

Kosovo*

There is a plan for re-establishing passenger traffic by 18th May. However, the decision will be made in accordance with the situation regarding COVID 19.

Kosovo* keeps border crossing Hani Elezit with North Macedonia open for international rail transport. Rail operations are performed regularly. In April 2020, there were 90 trains exchanged with North Macedonia, which is a significant rise compared with 16 trains in April 2019.

No.	Transport data	April 2019	April 2020	Difference 2020 - 2019
1	Train kms of freight trains	4,677.00	10,478.70	5,801.70
2	Gross tons of freight trains	135,396.80	430,554.00	295,157.20
3	Gross tons kms of freight trains	3,330,517.40	8,678,810.60	5,348,293.20
4	Net tons of freight trains	55,239.00	175,174.00	119,935.00
5	Net tons kms of freight trains	1,483,158.00	3,473,308.20	1,990,150.20

Figure 11. Train kilometres, gross tones and net tons of freight for January – April 2019 and 2020

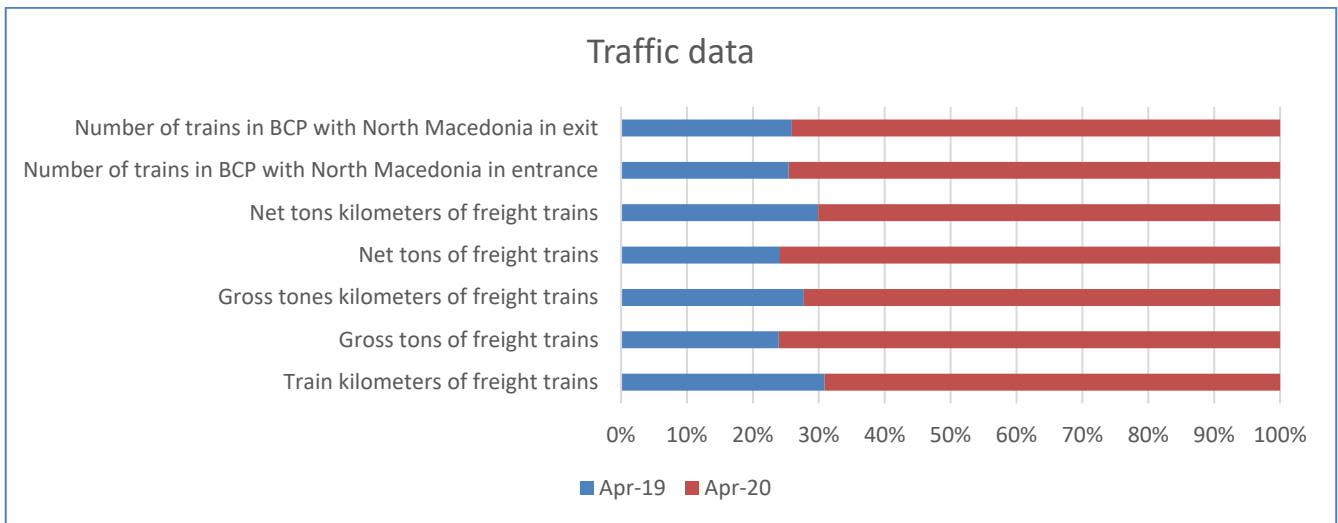


Figure 12. Train kilometres, gross tones and net tons of freight for January – April 2019 and 2020

The main reason for the significant rise in April 2020 compared to April 2019 is the large transport of nickel ore from Port of Thessaloniki to the “New Co Ferronickeli” company.

North Macedonia

Passenger traffic will be open (in higher capacity) most likely after 25th May. It depends on the assessment of the situation with the pandemic.

There are three BCPs open 24h with Kosovo*, Serbia and Greece.

	Wagons		Tones		NTKM (net tons km)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
January	4811	6764	140520	183353	26398716	35118512
February	4558	5454	147205	153619	27562938	29499560
March	6522	5000	181047	150000	34202400	27000000
April	6200	4840	184687	164082	33862573	31783852
total	22091	22058	653459	651054	122026627	123401924

Figure 13. Transport figures for the period January - April 2019 and 2020

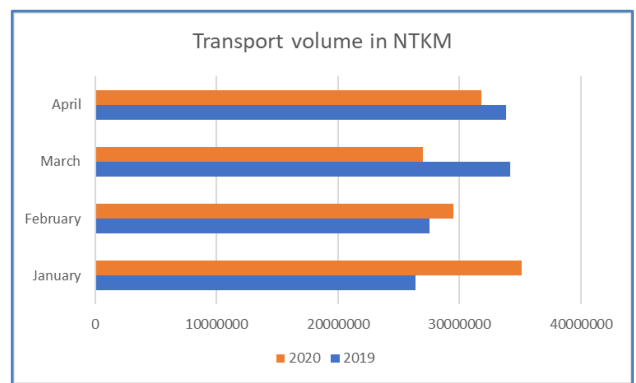
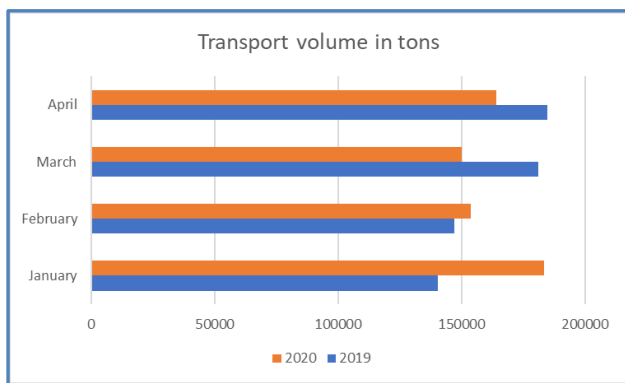
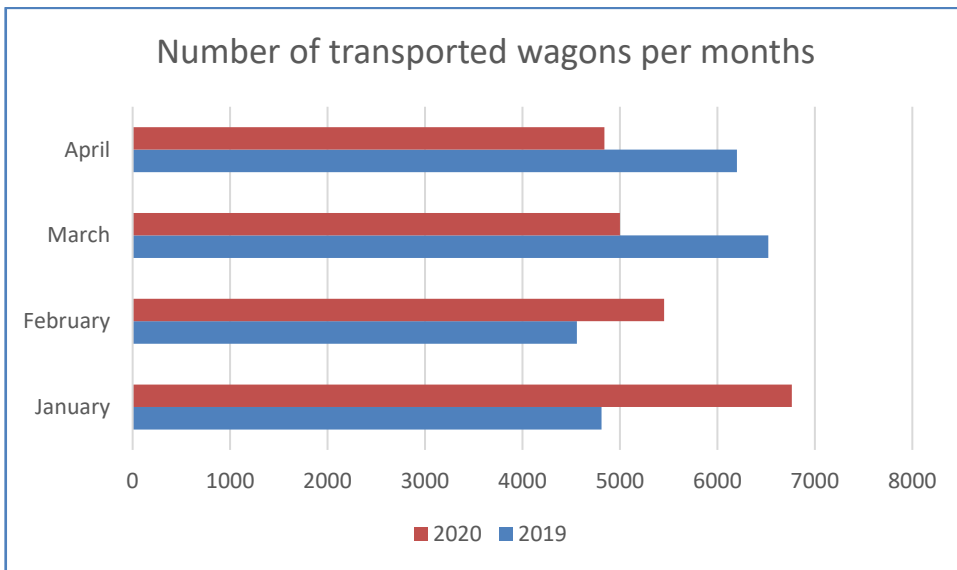
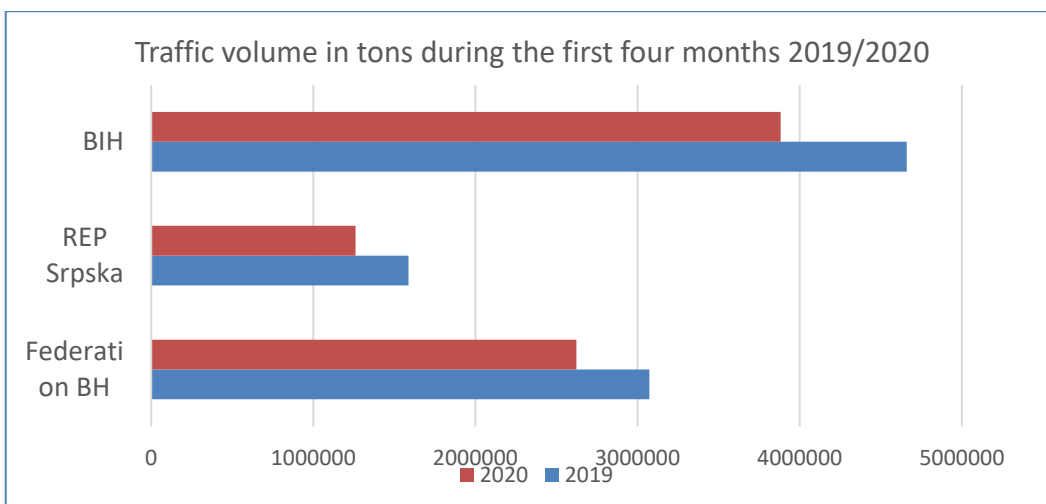


Figure 14, 15. and 16. Transport volume in MK for the period January - April 2019 and 2020

Bosnia and Herzegovina

BIH has two open BCPs with Croatia on Corridor Vc (Capljina/Metkovic and Slavonski Samac/Bosanski Samac) and one BCP with Serbia in joint rail station Brasina.

Like with other regional participants, passenger traffic is on standstill, while freight performs almost as usual.



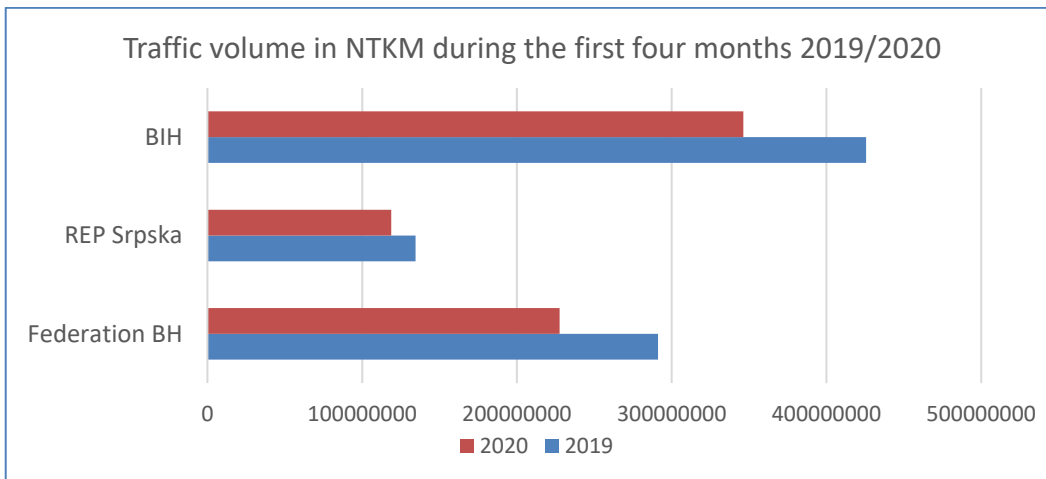


Figure 17. and 18. Transport volume in BIH for the period January - April 2019 and 2020

	Tones		NTKM (net tons km)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Federation BH	3072805	2622547	291157590	227558458
REP Srpska	1587549	1259886	134437218	118773687
BIH	4660354	3882433	425594808	346332145

Figure 19. Transport figures for the period January - April 2019 and 2020

Albania

The Albanian Railway has performed the following freight in the period January-March 2019/2020:

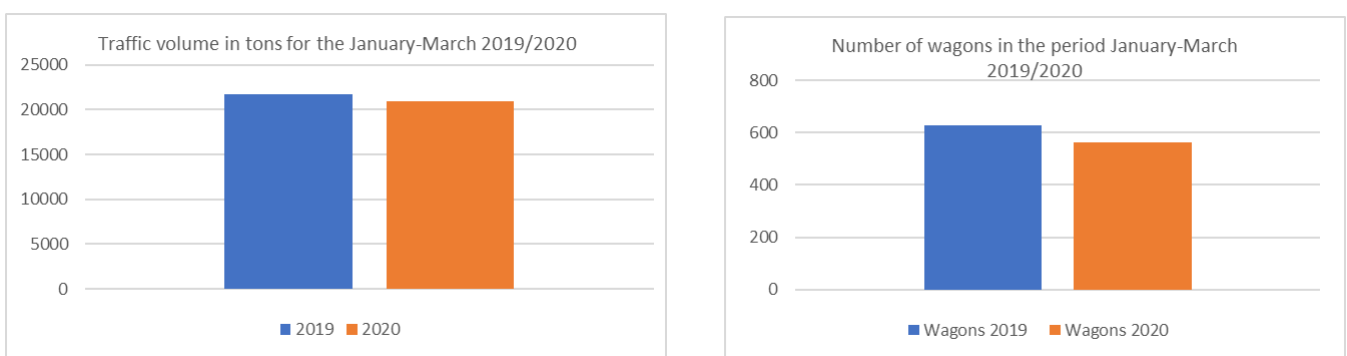


Figure 20. Transport volume in Albania for the period January - March 2019 and 2020

International freight shipping was performed through joint rail border station Tuzi.