

Rail Freight Transport: the impact of COVID-19 on transport volumes until the end of May

International passenger traffic is still suspended in all WB6 due to the closure of borders. There are some intentions about re-establishing international rail traffic from July 1, but there is no official confirmation yet. At the national level, passenger traffic is slightly recovered due to the lifting of imposed measures taken by national authorities.

Passenger traffic has been re-established in Serbia from 4th May, but not in full capacity. During May, number of passengers is around 20% lower compared to pre-Covid 19 time. Also, the situation is similar in the rest of the WB parties, regarding the number of passengers.

In North Macedonia domestic traffic is performed with small number of daily passengers. Kosovo* as well as Montenegro, restarted passenger traffic from 18th May.

Bosnia and Hercegovina decided to start just with rail passenger trains on the entity level, from 12th May, there are no trains between two entities yet.

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.

All railway undertakings and infrastructure managers applied similar protection measures for passenger transport. These are:

- Passengers without masks are not allowed to enter the transport vehicle;
- If there is any person without masks, both the citizen and the company shall be punished (in accordance with the applicable provisions);
- Use 50 % of the capacity of seats by respecting the distance;
- No more than one person is allowed in a seat of seats;
- Movement shall be done in accordance with the movement schedule;
- Disinfection of vehicles according to the instructions for disinfection;

During March and April, rail freight operations are performed at almost the same level as before the COVID-19 crises, but during May, there is significant decrease of the transport volume compared to the same period last year (around 25%).

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

*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.

In the 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. The overview of the border crossings that are 24h open for the rail freight operation

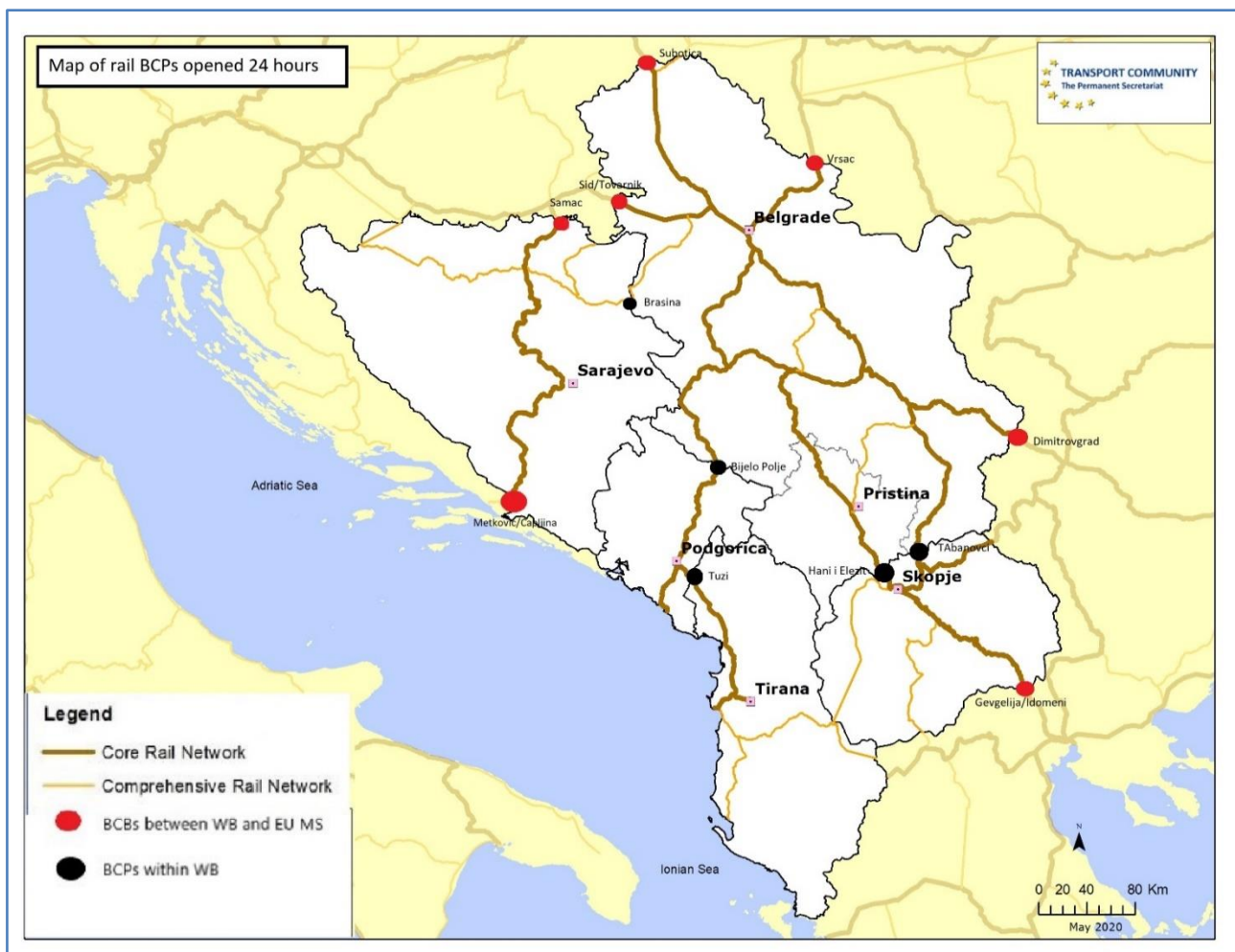


Figure 2. Border crossings open 24 hours for rail freight operation

Within a reported period (March-May) there was no major difference related to the waiting times on borders compared to pre-COVID-19 period. It does not mean that railway undertakings and infrastructure managers, with support of the government authorities (custom, border police and inspection) should be satisfied with current figures about waiting times at the borders. There are different tools for decreasing time at the borders like “one-stop-shop” based on bilateral agreement, infrastructure improvement (when there is not enough capacity within a station) as well as using ITS tools for informing and exchanging data in advance (before train’s arrival to the border). TC Secretariat is ready to facilitate all potential problems at intra-WB borders as well as external borders with EU member states.

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

RP	Tons		Net ton-kilometres (NTKM)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
SER	4847260	4364135	1373600000	1082150000
ALB	21664	20919		
MNE	434981	440258	37649166	38144563
MK	846008	802569	122026627	123401924
KOS	438078	494953	11297741	10202960
BIH	5085472	4072493	461214126	364704172
TOTAL	11673463	10195328	2005787660	1618603620

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

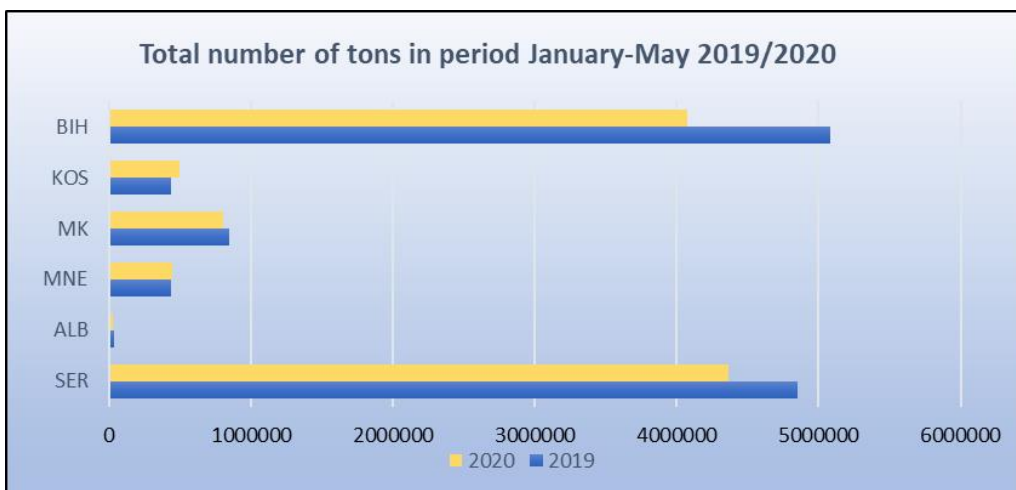


Figure 4. Freight transport in the WB region in tons in 2019 and 2020

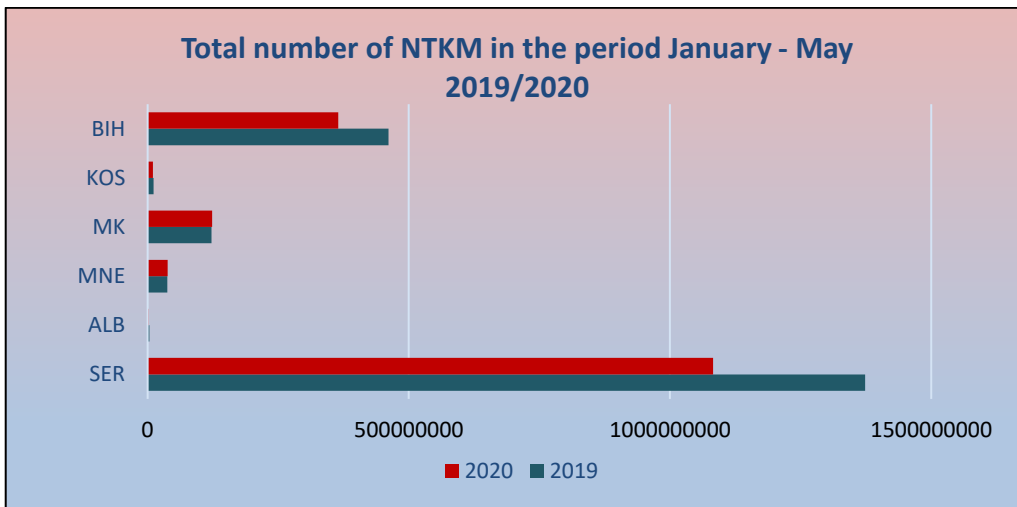


Figure 5. Freight transport in the WB region in Net ton-kilometres (NTKM) in 2019 and 2020

Rail freight as a mode of transport has shown more resilience compared to the road, during the COVID 19. The first impression, looking to the figures (based on available data), is that there are no significant differences in freight operation when compared to the first four months of 2020 and same period in 2019. **However, during May there is significant decrease (around 25%) in freight transport at the regional level.**

Overview of the transport figures per regional participant

Montenegro

Passenger traffic is re-established from the May 18th.

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 May 2020 is at the 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	
May 2019	May 2020	May 2019	May 2020	May 2019	May 2020
117496	85772	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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

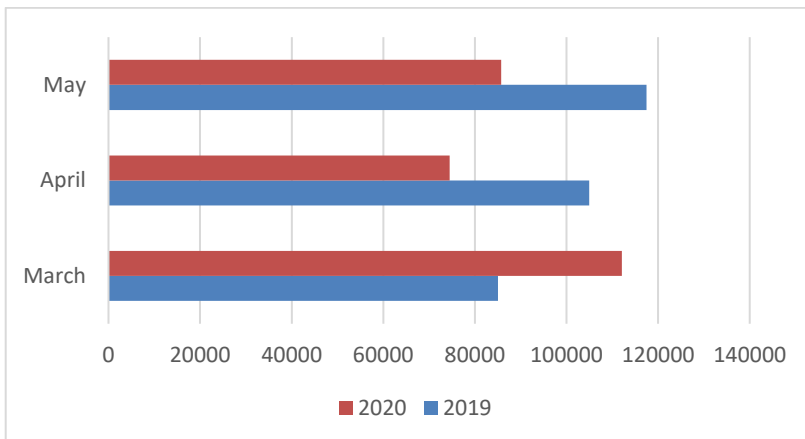


Figure 7: Transport volume in tons and during March, April and May 2019 and 2020

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, but there is about 35% decline in April and 27% in May 2020 compared to the same months in 2019.

Unfortunately, the decline in rail freight transport and transshipment in the Port of Bar continued in May. Montecargo transported 85,772 net tons in May, which is 27% less than in the same month last year.

73,797 tons were transhipped in the Port of Bar, which is 44% less than in May last year. The company Port of Adria had a higher transshipment of containers (4903) than last year in May by 19%, while in the transport of general cargo transshipment was 6128 tons and was lower by 43%.

Serbia

Passenger intercity traffic has been re-established, in a reduced volume, on 4th May 2020, while the normalization in terms of 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 (spot for entrance, moving around in the train and exiting) and respect social distancing, while trains are being disinfected.

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 - May 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, the cargo activity of the railway undertakings is more or less at the same level 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 at all border crossing in the period January - April 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. Data for May is not available yet.

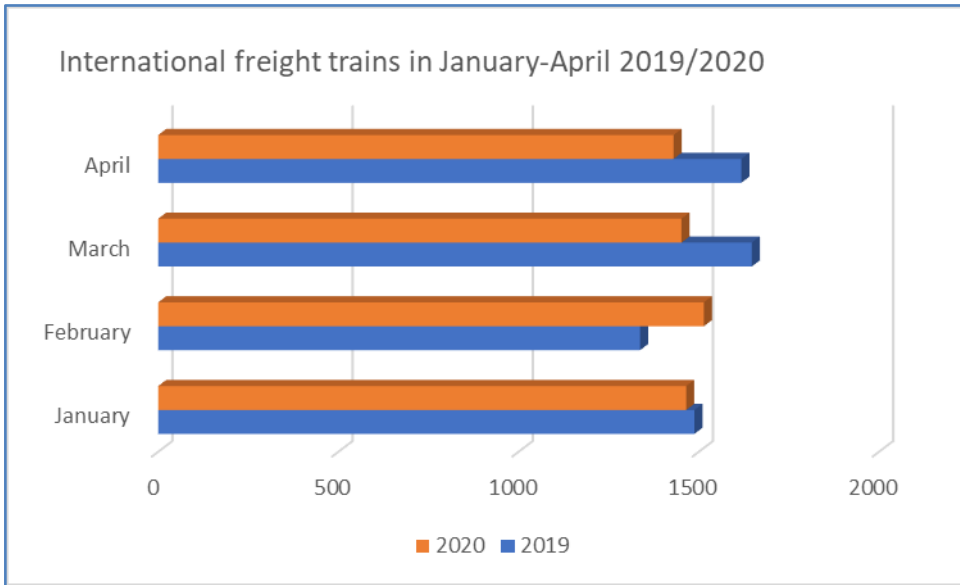


Figure 8. Total number of trains on border crossings in Serbia

Month	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	765.4	217	194.3
May	899	717.2	214.4	177.8
total	4406	3819	1053	964

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

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

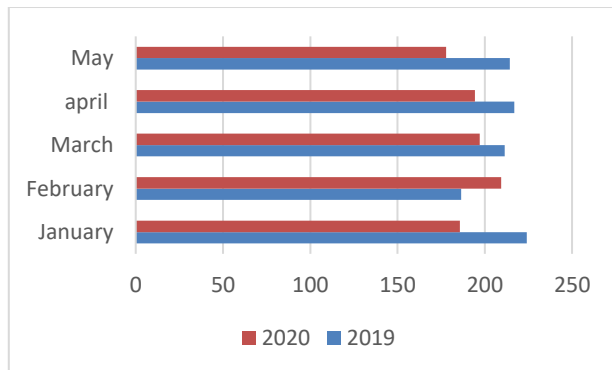
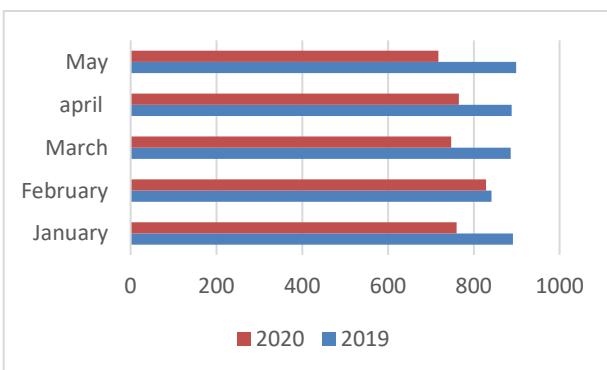


Figure 10. Transport volumes in Serbia in Tons (000) and NTKM (000000) in the first five months of 2019 and 2020

Kosovo

The re-establishing of the domestic passenger traffic done by 18th May, in reduced capacity and with full sanitation measures (social distance, gloves, masks, disinfection of vehicle etc).

Kosovo keeps border crossing Hani Elezit with North Macedonia open for international rail transport. Rail operations are performed regularly. In May 2020, there were 37 trains exchanged with North Macedonia, which is same number as in May 2019.

No.	Transport data	May 2019	May 2020	2020 - 2019
1	Train kilometers of freight trains	6,178.30	6,403.50	225.2
2	Gross tons of freight trains	399,462.90	226,382.00	-173,080.90
3	Gross tones kilometers of freight trains	4,454,005.40	5,027,385.70	573,380.30
4	Net tons of freight trains	79,209.00	91,321.00	12,112.00
5	Net tons kilometers of freight trains	2,573,533.80	2,042,815.00	-530,718.80
6	Number of trains in BCP with North Macedonia in entrance	19	19	0
7	Number of trains in BCP with North Macedonia in exit	18	18	0

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

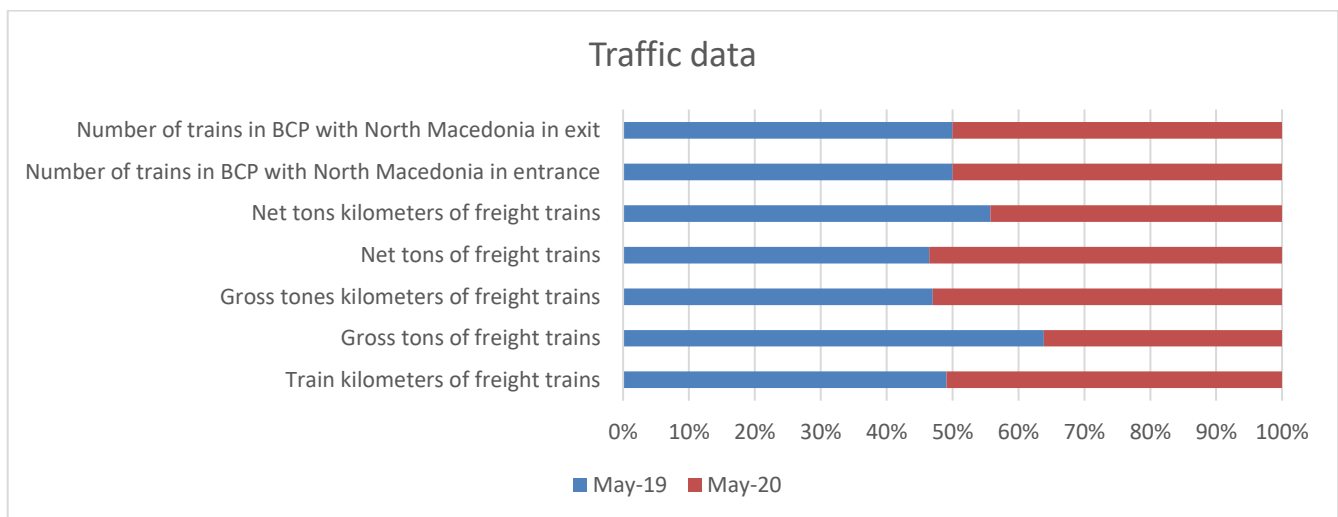


Figure 12. Train kilometres, gross tones and net tons of freight for January – May 2019 and 2020

Positive trend in freight transport from April is continued during May.

North Macedonia

Passenger traffic is ongoing but not in full capacity. It depends on the assessment of the situation with the pandemic. Officially from 15.06.2020, “state of emergency” will be lifted, most of the measures are lifted, only recommendations from the health Authorities should be respected, despite the number of infected people is still very high.

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
May	n/a	n/a	192549	151515	n/a	n/a
total	22091	22058	846008	802569	122026627	123401924

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

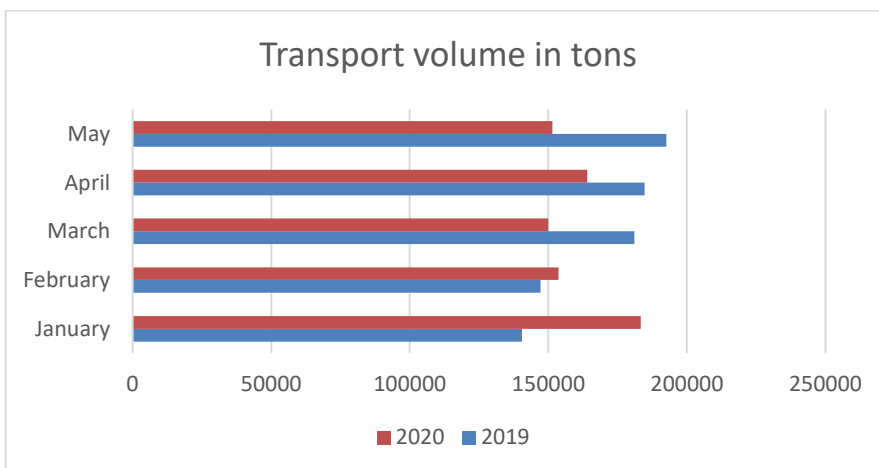
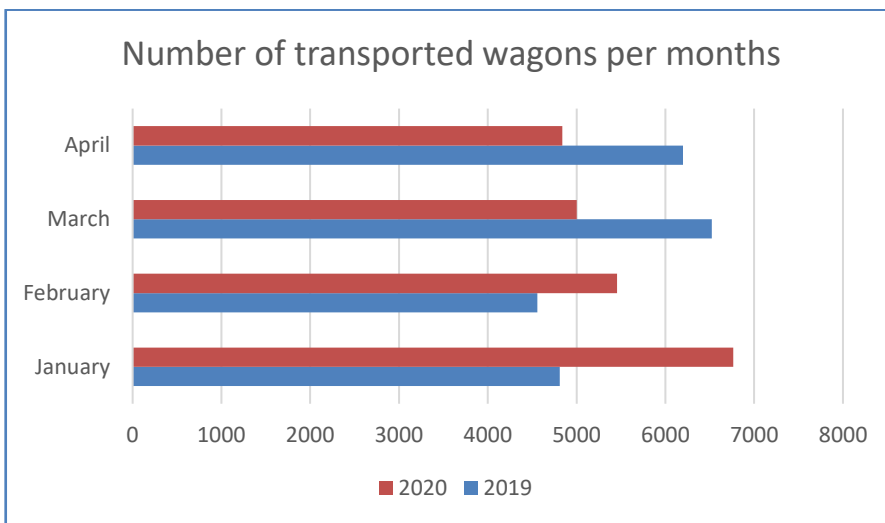


Figure 14 and 15. Transport volume in MK for the period January - May 2019 and 2020

Bosnia and Herzegovina

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

Like in other regional participants, passenger traffic is on standstill, while freight is performed almost regularly.

BIH re-established domestic passenger traffic at the entity level, but not yet at the state level (inter-entity traffic).

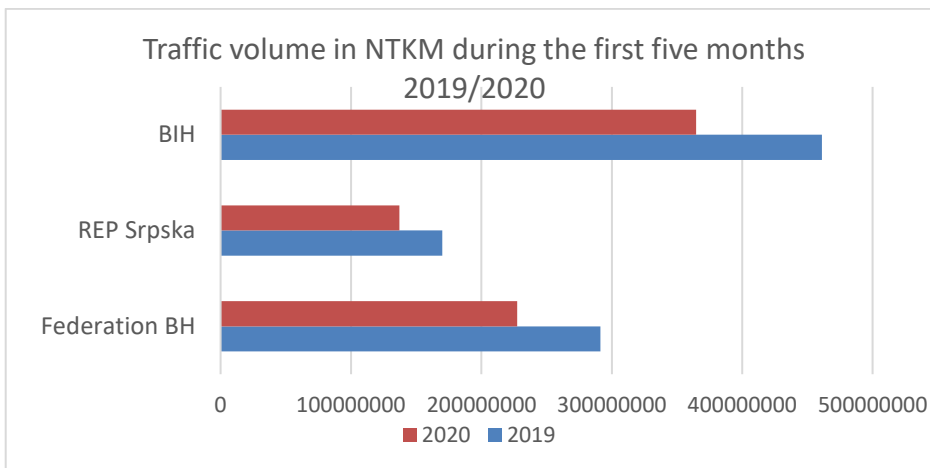
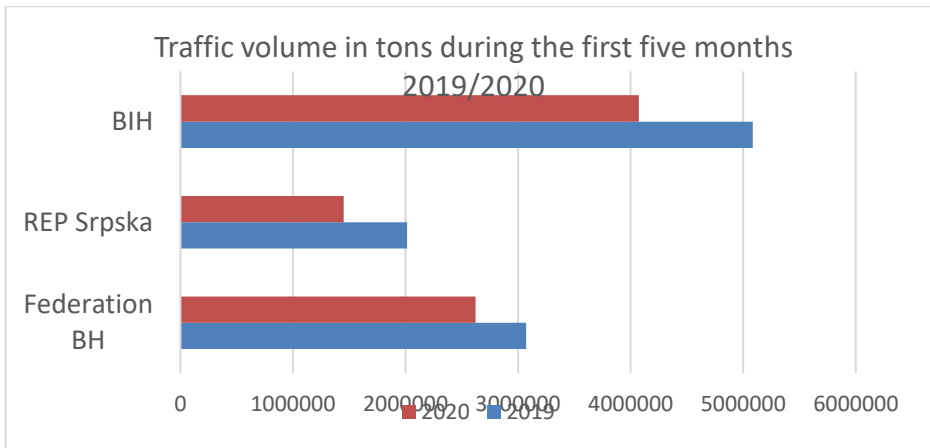


Figure 17 and 18: Transport volume in BIH for the period January - May 2019 and 2020

	Tones		NTKM (net tons km)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Federation BH	3072805	2622547	291157590	227558458
REP Srpska	2012667	1449946	170056536	137145714.1
BIH	5085472	4072493	461214126	364704172

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

Albania

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

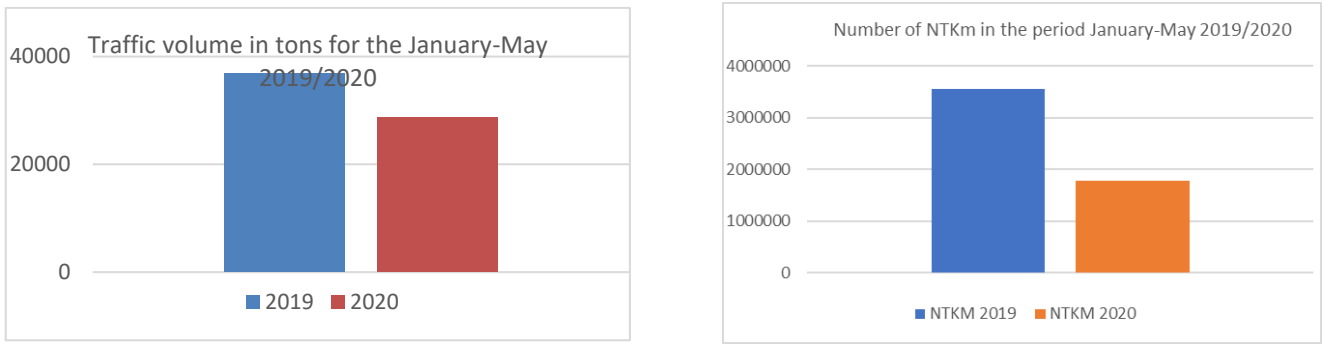


Figure 19. Transport volume in Albania for the period January – May 2019 and 2020

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