

On 9 February 2022, the first meeting of all rail infrastructure managers of Western Balkans took place in Skopje. The gathering is a follow up to the Memorandum of Understanding for establishing a network of railway infrastructure managers, which was signed at the Western Balkans Rail Summit in Belgrade on 13 September 2021. The 11th Technical Committee on Railways also took place in Skopje the following day, to review progress on implementation of the TCT Rail Action Plan, which specifies how to align legislation, improve infrastructure and re-establish rail passenger transport in the Region.



Infrastructure projects and rail sector reforms were in focus also during the TCT Secretariat delegation's visit to Albania on 1-2 February 2022. At the meetings with the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, the National Inspectorate and the Albanian Railways it was concluded that finalising construction of rail Corridor VIII remains a priority for Albania. Focus will be on rehabilitation of the Tirana-Durres railway, building a new railway section to Mother Teresa International Airport, modernising the line from Durres to Lin and building a railway link from Lin to the border with North Macedonia. Once completed, Corridor VIII rail route will connect the Port of Durres to the Bulgarian Black Sea via North Macedonia. The TCT Secretariat delegation stressed that these important infrastructure investments need to go hand in hand with policy and institutional reforms.

TCT Secretariat representatives met on 3 February 2022 with the Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, Mr. Tomislav Momirović and his team to discuss cooperation with emphasis on joint initiatives planned for 2022. Progress on development of rail in Serbia was reviewed with focus on modernisation of the railway line between Belgrade and Budapest. To move forward on making rail travel more appealing for the citizens of Serbia, interlocutors agreed that adoption of several key laws such as Law on Interoperability, Law on Railways and Law on Safety, will be essential. Finalising rail infrastructure projects and establishing regular rail passenger service between Belgrade and Timisoara was highlighted as one of priorities for 2022.



Director Matej Zakonjšek met in Pristina with Prime Minister of Kosovo*¹ Albin Kurti and the Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Liburn Aliu, who expressed highest political support for connectivity in the Western Balkans. Major infrastructure projects from the European Commission's Economic and Investment Plan, namely the "Peace Highway" Nis – Pristina and upgrading of the rail network will enhance connectivity in the Region.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

On 8 February 2022, the TCT Secretariat delegation met in Budapest with the Director General of the Danube Commission, Mr. Manfred Seitz for discussions on how to address bottlenecks on the Danube, improve navigability of Sava and Tisa and utilise the potential of ports of Belgrade and Novi Sad.

Representatives of regional organisations working on the economic development of the Western Balkans met at the Headquarters of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat on 24-25 February 2022. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the Energy Community, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and the Transport Community presented their priorities for 2022, focusing on areas of established or planned cooperation with other organisations.



Synergies with regional organisations and coordination of major initiatives planned for 2022 were the topics of meetings with the Deputy Secretary General of the Central European Initiative Ms. Nina Kodelja on 15 February 2022 and with the Director of the Energy Community Mr. Artur Lorkowski a day later.

Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI) Albania organised a panel on extension of TENT network to the Western Balkans on 16 February 2022. Director Zakonjšek’s intervention focused on Transport Community’s support to infrastructure projects on rail corridor VIII linking Albania, North Macedonia and Bulgaria.

Decrease of Road Deaths in Western Balkans 2010-2020



During the ministerial session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on 22 February 2022, TCT presented its continual focus on road safety in the Western Balkans. In order to obtain reliable data, which is crucial for well-targeted road safety policies, the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory was established under the auspices of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat. Special focus also needs to be put on level crossings, intersections of roads and railways, as one of the most sensitive points. The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat, together with its Regional Partners and with support of the EU, is

mapping the most critical level crossing points in the Region and is working to increase their safety by improving infrastructure, training the staff, as well as planning a region-wide awareness raising campaign. On 10 February 2022, TCT Secretariat’s road safety expert participated at the WHO Europe webinar on the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2020 and highlighted priority actions to improve safety and save lives on roads in the Region.

In February, TCT continued preparations for major events that will be organised in 2022. On the occasion of the International Women’s Day, the Transport Community will organise an online event „**Women in Transport**“ on 8 March as a call for action to increase women’s participation in the transport sector. **The Western Balkans Road Summit** is expected to take place in Tirana on 7 June 2022, to exchange knowledge and raise awareness on development of safer, efficient, interoperable, digitalised, sustainable and green road infrastructure.