



# ANNUAL OPERATIONAL REPORT 2021

Permanent Secretariat of Transport Community

20 January 2022

Version 1

## FOREWORD

Year 2021 was as challenging as the previous one. Even though we got used to living with the limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Transport Community, with its Members and the Permanent Secretariat, achieved concrete and visible results in the field of transport and connectivity. There was an important progress achieved towards realising our joint goal: integration of transport markets of Western Balkans into the EU.

In 2021 the Permanent Secretariat, together with regional partners and European Commission, developed the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for Western Balkans together with a corresponding Gap Analysis. The Strategy mirrors the EU's Strategy and proposes a set of measures framed in a roadmap to help the region move towards a sustainable, smart and resilient mobility system and to direct it to the structural changes required to achieve climate neutrality and its Green Agenda goals as stated in the Sofia Declaration signed by the Western Balkans leaders in November 2020.

The Action Plans First-Year Progress Report was drafted with the purpose of presenting the progress made in implementing the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat's four Action Plans<sup>1</sup>.

Implementation of the Road Action Plan is at the core of the activities of our Regional Partners coupled with the continuous efforts to develop the Core and Comprehensive Road Network. The Road Technical Committee played a pivotal role in the progress of Road Action Plan measures. Progress was achieved in the measures aiming to improve road maintenance systems and preparation of the strategic framework for deployment of ITS. TCT Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Regional Partners, identified and secured financing for Technical assistance to support the implementation of the Road Action Plan measures. This Technical assistance will tackle actions related to ITS deployment, preparation for development of e-charging stations along the road network and setting the foundation to ensure e-tolling interoperability. The completion of the Technical Assistance in 2022 will provide a boost to this region's efforts to green and digitalise the road sector.

The main work on Road Safety was based on the actions set in the Road Safety Action Plan which address issues related to infrastructure safety, road user behaviour, measures to enhance road safety management and to encourage the exchange of best practices. During 2021, significant progress was made in two measures: finalisation of the detail designs for improvement of 10 high-risk road sections with a length of 300 km of the Core and Comprehensive network and the establishment of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory (WBRSO). WBRSO is part of the Global Network of Road Safety Observatories, which gives the opportunity to WBRSO members to learn from the experience of other regions.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/One-year-progress-report-on-implementation-of-TCT-Action-Plans-14-10-2021-14-50.pdf>

2021 was marked as the European Year of Rail and in that spirit many activities of the Secretariat were focused on rail. The TCT Secretariat organised the first 2021 Western Balkans Rail Summit, where the Regional Partners reconfirmed their strategic dedication to the development of the railway system. This event, together with the first capacity building Rail Summer School and the three Technical Committees on railway organised during 2021, substantially contributed towards maintaining railways as highest priority of the Regional Partners, as well for the Secretariat.

The activities related to the transport facilitation sector in 2021 were focused on the preparation of the assistance for implementation of the Transport Facilitation Action Plan and on the establishment of the Green Lanes. The WB6 Green Lanes is now a fully implemented concept, as it was extended to all intra-Western Balkans crossing points in 2021. Discussions on the Western Balkans - EU Green Lanes initiative launched jointly by the Transport Community's and CEFTA's Secretariats have progressed, and Green Lanes is now considered to be introduced by Bulgaria and Greece.

Transposition of the set of Directives on transport of dangerous goods was at the core activities of the Transport of Dangerous Goods Committee created in 2021. The Committee successfully created its Work Plan and its Guidelines were welcomed by the RSC, while receiving technical support from the EU Member States, the Commission and the relevant international stakeholders on the occasion of its meetings. The Commission, in cooperation with the transport Community Permanent Secretariat, and at the request of Kosovo\* , successfully organised a workshop introducing more than 100 officials from the Regional Partners to the scope of the transport of dangerous goods acquis.

The last missing puzzle of the modes covered by the Transport Community Treaty was put in place by the Waterborne Transport and Multimodality Action Plan, which was drafted and approved by both, the Regional Steering Committee and Ministerial Council in the course of 2021, setting out clear goals and milestones for the period 2021 – 2025 for Regional Partners in terms of acquis harmonisation and infrastructural interventions in inland waterways, maritime and multimodality.

Setting-up of the Transport Observatory also gained momentum in 2021, with Phase I fully completed and crucial steps of Phase II development successfully carried out. The beginning of 2022 finds us with all conditions in place for the effective delivery of the Transport Observatory's main analytical tool, i.e. the Transport Observatory Database/Information System (TODIS).

A number of EU acquis workshops were organised in the Regional Partners with a view to establish the needs in respect of EU transport *acquis* transposition and implementation, as well as designing supporting activities, workshops and trainings and ongoing further support plans for 2022. But what would transport be, without the people that work in transport. 2021 Social Forum tackled the social issues in the rail sector and clearly showed the need for a good social dialogue in the region.

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\* 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.

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## BACKGROUND



*Figure 1. Image courtesy of European Commission*

The Transport Community is an international organisation in the field of mobility and transport, consisting of 33 participants – the EU and the six Western Balkans Regional Partners (RP). The organisation is working on the integration of Western Balkans' transport markets into the EU, by assisting the six Western Balkans Partners to adopt and implement EU legislation in the field of transport and by supporting projects that are connecting Western Balkans Regional Partners among themselves and with the EU.

In line with the Financial Rules and Auditing Procedures applicable to the Transport Community, Article 59, The Permanent Secretariat prepares an Annual Report, by 30 March of each year. The Annual Report shall include an operational report explaining the work carried out by the Permanent Secretariat and the results achieved, giving an overview of the progress towards the objectives set in the annual Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat and a financial report on the budget implementation.

This Annual Operational Report on the activities of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat outlines key actions and achievements in the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.

## ACTIVITIES IN 2021

### 1. RAILWAY

All activities as per the Rail Action Plan<sup>4</sup> were mainly focused on policy reforms and improvements of the rail system for the whole 2021. While the development of the indicative extension of TEN-T network is included in the Annual Report, presented later in this report, transport policy aspects are monitored through the first Year Progress Report on Action plans, prepared and presented to the Ministers in October 2021<sup>3</sup>.

In that regard, the rail market opening is one of the most important measures of the Rail Action Plan and an integral part of the Transport Community Treaty. In four out of six Regional Partners the rail market is opened at the domestic level and there are eight private Railway Undertakings in three Regional Partners. All Regional Partners agreed that the rail market opening shall be treated as priority. The aim is a full implementation of the EU legislation on interoperability and improving the overall governance of the railways. Restructuring of national rail companies is an ongoing activity among all Regional Partners. This process should be finalised before passing into the second transition period (as defined in Annex I of the Transport Treaty).

Further efforts are needed in the area of passenger rights in rail transport. Most of the Regional Partners have taken actions to transpose certain parts of the regulation related to passenger rights. However, full implementation is still lagging.

There is limited progress in implementing the technical pillar of the 4<sup>th</sup> Rail package by all Regional Partners. Besides rail reforms, the most visible improvement in rail transport efficiency can be achieved by cutting the waiting times at the borders/common crossing points by improving and digitalising services. There was some progress made in this regard where Serbia has initiated new border crossings agreements with its bordering EU countries.

The first Western Balkans Rail Summit was held in Belgrade on 13 September 2021. The Rail Summit hosted around 200 participants in person, coming from all six South-East European Parties and the European Union. The participants were coming from public sector institutions, private companies, civil society and academia.

At the Summit, two major deliverables were delivered which will contribute to getting rail back on track in the Western Balkans:

- Dedication to Rail signed by all WB6 Ministers responsible for transport<sup>4</sup>.
- Memorandum of Understanding for creation of the Network of Infrastructure Managers signed by six of them in the WB6<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/One-year-progress-report-on-implementation-of-TCT-Action-Plans-14-10-2021-14-50.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Dedication-to-Rail-09092021.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MoU-of-Infrastructure-Managers-WB6-10092021.pdf>





*Figure 2. Signing the Dedication to Rail by all WB6 transport Ministers, 13 September 2021 in Belgrade*

The TCT Secretariat participated in ERA training in October 2021 focused on safety management with human and organisational factors.

The first regional project on level crossing safety improvement, conducted with infrastructure managers from the Region and with the support of JASPERS advanced in 2021 and data collection has almost been finalised. The project will be finished in 2022.

The TCT Secretariat continued with monitoring of the transport operations in the Region. Based on figures before the pandemic, the trend on traffic volume of freight is minus 10% in Serbia and is almost at the same level in Kosovo and North Macedonia. Montenegro volume has grown a bit in 2021 and Albania has a drop of 50% compared to the period before the pandemic. When we talk about passenger transport, there is just one international train in WB at the moment and, in general, in 2021 there is a drop of 50% compared to the same period in 2019.

## 2. ROAD

The activities of the road sector were focused on the two main pillars of the Treaty, development of the indicative extension of TEN-T network and transposition of EU acquis. While the monitoring of the development of indicative extension of TEN-T network is included in the Annual Report, presented later in this report, transport policy aspects are monitored through the Action Plans First Year Progress Report, prepared and presented to the Ministers in October 2021<sup>6</sup>.

Overall pace of progress in the implementation of the Road Action Plan, varies from slow to moderate. Moderate progress is reported mainly regarding road maintenance, where all Regional Partners have put a three-year maintenance framework in place. A Road Asset Management System is already in place in North Macedonia, with progress reported in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The preparation of a strategic framework for deploying Intelligent Transport System (ITS) and the respective legal transposition acts should have made better progress as one of the key interest areas for the Region. Albania has already adopted a strategy for ITS deployment across the road network, while North Macedonia and Serbia have experienced delays in getting the projects off the ground. Albania and Serbia are progressing with the adoption of EU ITS standards. Improving transport resilience and deployment of alternative fuels remains a challenge for the Region, with limited progress achieved during the year. It is evident that the region will need more significant support from all stakeholders, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat, European Commission (EC), and international financial institutions (IFIs) to leapfrog in the race towards more sustainable and resilient road transport development.

Regarding the development of the TEN-T network, TCT Secretariat participated in the commencement of works on the Nis-Merdare-Pristina Highway (Peace Highway), opening of the Svilaj Bridge on Corridor Vc in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as at the ceremony of connecting two sides of Gradiska bridge on Route 2, connecting Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

During the last meeting of Regional Steering Committee that took place in Belgrade on 16 December 2021, it was agreed that 2022 will be dedicated to Roads of the Future. Concept Notes for the Road Summit and Summer School were prepared and shared with our counterparts.

Furthermore, the draft Memorandum of Understanding between Road Authorities/Public Enterprises, after being discussed with the members of the Road Technical Committee has been sent officially to all Directors for their comments and consideration. Once finalised, it will comprise one of the main deliverables of the Road Summit 2022.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/One-year-progress-report-on-implementation-of-TCT-Action-Plans-14-10-2021-14-50.pdf>



### 3. ROAD SAFETY

Overall progress for year 2021 for the Road Safety Action Plan is slow. However, some Regional Partners have achieved a moderate level of progress. All Regional Partners have embraced the new goals of the Second Decade of Action 2021-2030 with aspirational targets by halving serious injuries and road deaths by 50%. Their vision is aligned with that of the UN and EU for introducing the Safe System approach (Vision 0) in their new Road Safety National Strategies linked to the implementation of their Action Plan. With UNDP's support, Bosnia and Herzegovina has drafted a new Road Safety Strategy at the state level, while Montenegro already has a Road Safety programme for 2000 - 2022. Regarding improvements to the level of coordination, new developments are ongoing in North Macedonia to establish the Road Safety Agency, and a proposal on the revised structure of the National Coordination Authority has been prepared. Kosovo has started work on establishing a Road Safety Agency, while Albania and Serbia have made progress with the transposition of the Road Infrastructure Safety Management Directive 2008/96 and with establishing the Road Safety Inspection and Audit licensing system. Serbia leads the way in terms of Road Safety and gives one of the best examples to be followed throughout the Region.

The Stockholm Declaration of February 2020 paved the way for further global political commitment with the UN General Assembly Resolution on road safety proclaiming the period 2021–2030 as the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety and including a new reduction target for 2030. In this regard, the EU and Western Balkans had set a new 50% reduction target for deaths – and, for the first time, also serious injuries - by 2030. The highlight of this decade is basing the road safety policy and work on Safe System approach and Vision 0 to be achieved by 2050.

The Road Safety Technical Committees continued to take place virtually during 2021. The main topic was to monitor and follow up the implementation of the Road Safety Action Plan as well as the exchange of good practices from EU Member States and within the Region.

Following the round of Roadshows and the Technical Assistance assessment carried out in this framework, the TCT Secretariat adopted a proactive approach, finding the most suitable mechanism to support the implementation of the Road Safety Action Plan.

During the 6th UN Road Safety Week, the Permanent Secretariat, together with the Global Alliance of NGOs, organised a round table with policy and decision makers, representatives of the European Commission, World Health Organization, various governmental institutions including local authorities and non-government organisations, with an objective to discuss 'speed management' among all road safety actors. The event was held online on Tuesday, 18 May.

In February 2021, the TCT Secretariat, with the technical assistance and support of Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, initiated procedures for establishing the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory (WBRSO)<sup>7</sup>. This initiative led to the integration of the Western Balkans regional initiative into the larger network of regional



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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wbrso/>

road safety observatories. The first deliverables are: (i) three-year Work Plan of the Road Safety Observatory, (ii) and the Regional Partners' profiles<sup>8</sup>. Endorsement of the First phase of the Road Safety Observatory took place at the Ministerial Council of TCT in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia. The WBRSO kick-off meeting was held on 8 July 2021.

The Regional Road Safety Conference and the second meeting of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory (WBRSO) was held on 6 and 7 December in Skopje, North Macedonia with the presence of fifty participants in person and twenty-five online. The meeting aimed to build capacity in road safety management, improve road safety data and exchange good practice examples from the EU Member States such as Spain, Greece and Czech Republic. The meeting brought together high-level representatives from UN, EC and the Minister of Ministry of Transport and Communications, Minister of Ministry of Interior, and Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation in North Macedonia.



*Figure 3. Regional Road Safety Conference, 6 December 2021 in Skopje*

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RPs-profiles-booklet.pdf>

#### 4. TRANSPORT FACILITATION

The activities related to the transport facilitation sector in 2021 were focused on the preparation of the assistance for implementation of the Transport Facilitation Action Plan and on the establishment of Green Lanes.

The overall pace of progress in the implementation of the Transport Facilitation Action Plan has been moderate. However, there is significant progress in some measures. The signing of the Agreement for Joint Border and Customs Control between Albania and North Macedonia, opening of the new border crossing point at Svilaj between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as completing the implementing agreements for joint rail border crossing between Kosovo and North Macedonia, are landmark achievements in line with the Action Plan.

The WB6 Green Lanes is now a fully implemented concept. In 2021, the Green Lanes have been extended to all intra-Western Balkans crossing points. Essential goods have been moving smoothly through the Green Corridors/Green Lanes in the Western Balkans at the designated crossing points in the Western Balkans, providing all required services 24/7. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, medical supplies, food and animal feed moved across the region more easily.

The Western Balkans - EU Green lanes initiative launched jointly by the Transport Community's and CEFTA's Secretariats is still being introduced. In 2021, intensive discussions and meetings were held with authorities of Bulgaria and Greece (Ministries of Transport and



Customs authorities) and the concept is nearly ready to be set up. The Custom authorities of the mentioned EU Member States are considering possibilities to extend the SEED system for exchange of pre-arrival customs information with their neighbouring WB6 partners. Similar discussions started with Italy concerning the exchange of pre-arrival information between the respective Customs authorities of Italy, Albania and Montenegro regarding the Adriatic ports.

Additionally, during the CEFTA Week 2021 held under chairmanship of North Macedonia, a specially devoted panel on Joint Border Crossings was organised by USAID, TCT and CEFTA, with an aim to present some regional and world-wide practises in establishing JBCPs and to bring the concept closer/raise awareness of a wider audience. The event held in Skopje on 15 December was attended by overall 90 participants (on-line and in person) from various state institutions, the transport industry, international organisations and donors.



The role and visibility of the Technical Committee on Transport Facilitation (TCTF) and its members has been considerably strengthened vis-a-vis the Transport Community's priorities, but also within the internal administrative systems of each Regional Participant. In particular, the role and engagement of the representatives from the Ministries of Transport followed by the Custom authorities is becoming more and more prominent. When it comes to Border Police, with the exception of a few Regional Partners, there is still a need for more active participation in the work of the TCTF. The coordination efforts in this respect will remain priority for the TCT Secretariat in 2022.

## 5. WATERBORNE TRANSPORT AND MULTIMODALITY

The Action Plan for Waterborne Transport and Multimodality was endorsed by the Regional Steering Committee on the meeting on 20 May 2021. The Action Plan was also endorsed at the meeting of the Ministerial Council on 5 July 2021 in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia. The Action Plan covers the important sections of maritime and ports, inland waterways and multimodality, and sets out priorities in both policy and infrastructural parts, by dividing actions according to legislation on one hand, and infrastructure, digital, and green elements on the other hand. With this Action Plan, all the modes stipulated by the Treaty are covered, moreover it includes the area of multimodality, as an integral part of the effective functioning of transport systems as a whole.

As regards to missions concerning waterborne transport in 2021, they were held in Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The bulk of the missions were to Albania (Tirana and Durres) in terms of drafting and agreeing on the Roadmap Measures for improving Albanian flag status in relation to the Paris MoU. The first Technical Committee on Waterborne Transport was held in Pristina. Although the Action Plan was endorsed only in May 2021, some deliverables have already been achieved in the course of 2021. These relate to establishment of the Centre of Excellence in Maritime Affairs (July in Durres) and the request for obtaining observer status in European Commission Working Groups on inland waterways, which was sent officially to European Commission by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

Additionally, in the course of 2021, many meetings, workshops and events have been organised by the Transport Community in the waterborne domain. The most important event was definitely the Transport Community Conference Regatta – “Towards a resilient, competitive, and sustainable maritime sector in the Western Balkans” was held on the 30 September 2021 in the Palace of Congress in Tirana, Albania. The Conference was organised by the Transport Community together with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania and was hosted by the Port Authority of Durres.



*Figure 4. Transport Community Conference Regatta,  
30 September 2021 in Tirana*

The objective of the Conference was to mark the World Maritime Day and highlight the essential role of Western Balkans ports and their challenges and opportunities towards resilience, competitiveness, and sustainability. The Conference for the first time gathered crucial stakeholders in the maritime domain of the Western Balkans, as well as the representatives of relevant maritime institutions on the EU and the global level.





TCT Secretariat actively participated in several physical and online events where the work of the Transport Community in the domain of waterborne transport was presented. These include the events in Pireaus, Greece (Green Port Congress 2021), EUSAIR forum on significance of investing in skills and education in maritime transport – Western Balkan Perspective (online), Opening of Centre of Excellence in Maritime Affairs (Durrës, Albania), Connecting EU insights workshop - Energy Transition in Ports and Logistics - Alternative fuels and technologies for energy transition – what does the future hold for maritime transport (online), INTERREG Joint event EnerNETMob Open Day / SuMo Info Day (Bar, Montenegro).

Structured cooperation was established with the other institutions and organisations such as IMO (International Maritime Organization), EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency), INE (Inland Navigation Europe), ESPO (European Sea Ports Organization), MoS – Motorways of the Sea (Kurt Bodewig as the MoS Coordinator) and ISRBC (International Sava River Basin Commission).

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year 2021, the TCT Secretariat, together with all the relevant maritime institutions in Albania, developed a Roadmap with 33 measures for improving Albanian flags status in relation to the Paris MoU. The roadmap aims at rectifying the situation and improving the Albanian flags status with 8 priority measures.

In the year 2021, the Transport Community was granted observer status to the Transport Community in the European Commission Expert Groups related to Inland Waterway Transport - NAIADES, Social Matters, Technical Requirements for Vessels and DINA Commission expert groups.

The Transport Community was also granted expert member status in the European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) and the sub-group on Sustainable Alternative Power for Shipping. This appointment is valid for the duration of the mandate of the sub-group.



## 6. TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS

The Transport of Dangerous Goods Technical Committee (TDG TC) started its work on 20 January 2021 and held 5 sessions in 2021 in order to define its working priorities. Due to COVID-19 pandemics, only the last session was held in a hybrid format, with some Regional Partners still attending the meeting remotely. However, the Agendas and discussions in the meetings were meant to enhance knowledge and capacity of the authorities in the Western Balkans, while providing useful examples of administrative practices from the EU Member States.

Despite the difficulties generated by online cooperation, TDG TC contributed to the “Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans” and defined its own priorities with the “Guidelines on Transport of Dangerous Goods” that were welcomed by the Regional Steering Committee at its 16 December 2021 session. The Guidelines constitute a working tool for administrations in the Regional Partners in order to set up and develop the necessary resources for enhancing activities in this field.

Moreover, there were concrete steps taken towards punctual intervention where representatives of the Regional Partners indicated concrete needs for assistance. Serbia has decided to enlarge the scope of an IPA 2018 ongoing project related to tachographs to digitalise the examination of the dangerous goods safety advisers, ADR drivers and ADN experts. Discussions with EU Delegation were facilitated timely, addressing the needs of the Serbian authorities, who are currently developing the terms of reference for an IPA call. The project will upgrade the examination system for the above-mentioned transport specialists and will ease the life of the administration, eliminating as soon as possible the paper based exams which are more time consuming.

TCT Secretariat representative participated as observer UN Sub-Committee of Experts on Transport of Dangerous Goods, UNECE Joint Meeting of Experts on the Regulations annexed to the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways etc. Cooperation is ongoing also with OTIF on subjects of common concern.

TCT Secretariat cooperated with various Commission departments and EU Delegations/Office to find the best suited approaches for the different areas covered in the transport of dangerous goods file. TCT Secretariat representative also participated as observer in the Commission Expert Group on TDG.

## 7. SOCIAL FORUM

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Social Forum, organised on 25 February 2021 took place online and managed to gather more than 50 participants (relevant EU institutions, key public authorities, non-governmental organisations, Union representatives) from the Western Balkans region and the EU. The Forum addressed the social issues in the rail sector following the 2021 European Year of Rail.

At the Forum the Regional Partners committed to reinforce and promote a dialogue for the social dimension in the rail transport through reference to the EU acquis in social matters listed in the Transport Community Treaty. They also recognised that digitalisation and modernisation will bring challenges (transition to a market with competing service providers, ageing workforce, staff shortage, competition with other modes) therefore a credible path for the fair transition for transport workers is needed. Also, the Transport Community has called on the Regional Partners to support education and training in line with the main common objective of achieving a sustainable, greener transport system, by making the best use of opportunities offered by technological innovation that could help identifying ways to attract young people and women to the transport sector.

The Conclusions of the Forum, welcomed at the Ministerial Council in July 2021, reconfirmed that the Western Balkans region needs to implement the EU social policy listed in the Transport Community Treaty and provide higher social standards (improve staff safety, attract new staff, manage ageing work force, and recruit young people).

The second topic that the Transport Community addressed in 2021 in the scope of social issues was gender balance as transport is a male dominated sector that contains gender gaps throughout all levels of the workforce. On 18 November 2021, the TCT Secretariat organised the first kick-off meeting Women in Transport - the Balkans Perspective. The meeting took place online and it brought together a group (45 participants) of key Regional Partners (European Commission, EBRD, UN and World Bank). The aim of the kick-off meeting was to exchange views and knowledge on the gender balance situation in the transport sector in the Western Balkans; to agree on a concept note, on how to address the most pressing issues on gender balance in the transport sector in the Region, which will be discussed at the first Women in Transport Conference on 8 March 2022, with a wider group of stakeholders.

The kick-off meeting was also the opportunity to establish much needed contacts with relevant Regional Partners, like the World Bank, United Nations Women, Regional Cooperation Council and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to make the needed push on the gender balance agenda in the transport sector in the Western Balkans region.

## 8. TRANSPORT OBSERVATORY

TCT Secretariat has been tasked under articles 9 and 28 of the Treaty to setup an information system in order to “act as a Transport Observatory to monitor the performance of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core networks to the Western Balkans”

The Transport Observatory is one of the key pillars of the Transport Community, being aimed to become the main information repository in relation with the TEN-T indicative extensions in the Western Balkans and, consequently, a solid analytical basis for political and technical decision-making processes at national/regional level.

The Transport Observatory’s functional scheme, as endorsed by the Regional Steering Committee, is provided below:

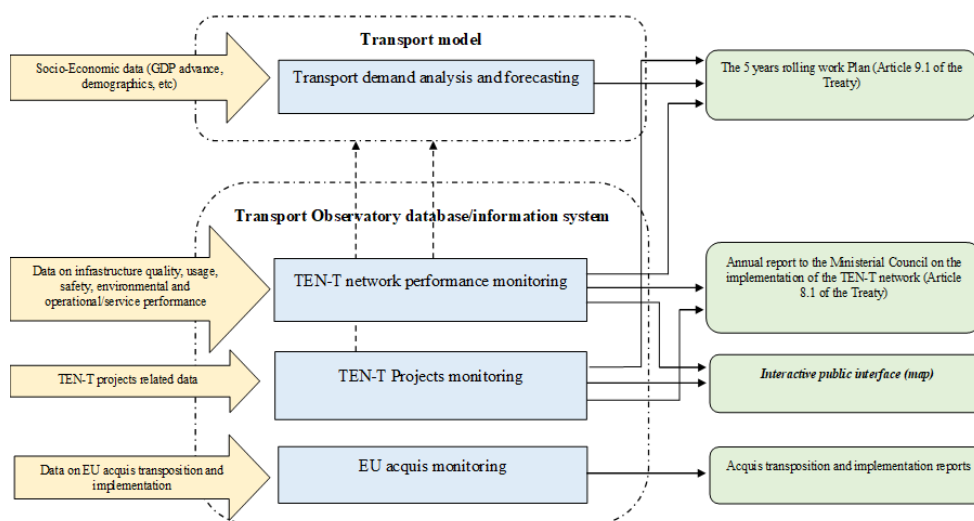


Figure 5. Outline of the Transport Observatory’s functional scheme

2021 was a crucial year for the development of the Transport Observatory. As early as January 2021, the activities under Transport Observatory Phase I began, namely:

- The setting-up of the Transport Observatory overall concept, implementation plan and budget;
- The definition of the Transport Observatory Database/Information System (TODIS) functional and technical requirements;
- The preparation of the tender documents for TODIS procurement;

The activities listed above were performed under a services contract awarded in late 2020 and that was successfully concluded in September 2021.

The procurement for Transport Observatory Phase II started on 20 September 2021 when the Contract notice was published in the EU Official Journal tender supplement (open procedure, as per the provisions of Directive no. 2014/24/EU). The deadline for bid submission was set for 01 November 2021. Upon the evaluation of the submitted bids, the Contract was awarded on 27 December 2021, setting-up the basis for TODIS full delivery in 2022.

## 9. TEN-T ANNUAL REPORT

The process of drafting the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the TEN-T Annual Report started in late 2020 with the approval by the Regional Steering Committee of its content, methodology and delivery timeline and commencement of the data collection. The draft version of the report was shared by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat with all Regional Partners on 26 April 2021 and approved by the Regional Steering Committee on 20 May 2021. On 5 July 2021, the Ministerial Council endorsed the Report, re-affirming the Region's commitment to support the development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core networks to the Western Balkans.

The report is basically benchmarking Regional Partners' progresses towards TEN-T compliance, providing information on:

- Compliance of indicative TEN-T extensions in Western Balkans with the technical standards set-up by Regulation no. 1315/2013;
- On-going projects on the Core and Comprehensive networks in Western Balkans area targeting compliance with TEN-T technical criteria and indicators;
- A 7-year forecast of the TEN-T network compliance, based on the scheduled completion date of the projects referred at above.

The approval of the TEN-T Annual Report marked an important milestone for the TC Treaty implementation, by providing a sound analytical basis for monitoring and coordinated development of critical transport infrastructure in the Region<sup>9</sup>.

The overall compliance rate per different modes varies. 44.86% of the 3,540 km of Core Network roads and 55.14% of the 1,746 km of Comprehensive Network roads are compliant with the basic TEN-T standards on infrastructure profile and condition. As for the railways, compliance rates vary significantly between various criteria. Approximately 73% of the Core Network (amounting at 2,602 km in total) and 54% of the Comprehensive Networks railways are currently electrified. The freight axle load compliance percentages stand as high as 87% for the Core Network and 72% on the Comprehensive. Compliance rates are also relatively high as regards the design speed criterion (72% for the Core Network and 61% for the Comprehensive Network) but fall sharply to 15% and 13% respectively as regards the operating speed. The waterborne transport has a relatively satisfactory level of compliance apart from availability of clean fuels, which is missing in all core inland and maritime ports.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TEN-T-report-2020.pdf>

## 10. SUSTAINABLE AND SMART MOBILITY STRATEGY – WESTERN BALKANS PERSPECTIVE

The Permanent Secretariat together with Ad-hoc group members has developed the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for Western Balkans<sup>10</sup>. The purpose of developing the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans is to:

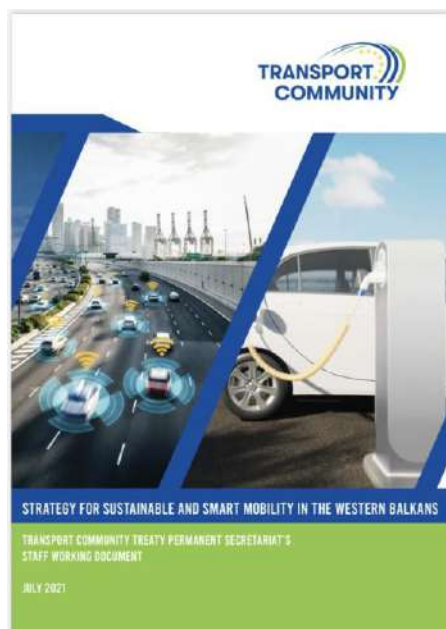
- mirror the European Union's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy;
- to adjust goals, milestones, and actions of the EU to the realities in the Western Balkans region;
- to provide the Region with a roadmap for decarbonisation and digitalisation of its transport sector.

Additionally, TCT Secretariat has developed a GAP analysis that helped to identify the current situation in regard to greenhouse emissions, deployment of alternative fuel infrastructure, multimodal systems, digitalisation of the sector, safety levels, single market challenges and the rights of passengers and transport workers.

This strategy outlines how the Western Balkans transport system can achieve its green and digital transformation and become more resilient to future crises. The result is predicted to substantially cut transport emissions by 2050 and contribute to the EU goal of climate neutrality, delivered by a smart, competitive, safe, accessible, and affordable transport system. This is also in line with policy initiatives indicated in the Western Balkans Green Agenda and Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.

The Strategy proposes a set of measures framed in a roadmap to help the region move towards a sustainable, smart, and resilient mobility system and to direct it to the structural changes required to achieve climate neutrality and its Green Agenda goals as stated in the Sofia Declaration signed by the Western Balkans leaders in November 2020. The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat will facilitate and support this process and assist the Regional Parties in achieving sustainable and smart mobility. The Strategy was presented and welcomed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Council of the Transport Community, held in Slovenia on 5 July 2021.

As a follow up of the measures to the Strategy, during the European Mobility Week on 21 September 2021, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat organised an online workshop on sustainable mobility in urban areas in the Western Balkans. The aim of the workshop was to ensure a common approach in sustainable and smart transport development in the Western Balkans and ensure connections between urban areas with the TEN-T Network. With the workshop, the first step was made to align



<sup>10</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/strategy-for-sustainable-and-smart-mobility-in-the-western-balkans-2/>



activities and to improve cooperation on the local, national and regional level in achieving the ultimate aim of having sustainable, smart and green mobility. The workshop hosted approx. 35 participants encompassing a wide range of stakeholders from international organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations etc.

Participants concluded on the necessity to ensure continuous cooperation between different administrative levels (national, regional, local) and civil societies to ensure a wider rollout of sustainable and smart mobility and to achieve climate neutrality. Urban nodes are more and more important for the overall functioning of the TEN-T multimodal network. There is a need to improve last-mile connections and address the problems of congestion and pollution often concentrated in urban areas.



## 11. MEETINGS OF BODIES ESTABLISHED UNDER THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY TREATY

For the first time since the Transport Community establishment, the Ministerial Council<sup>11</sup> held in Brdo pri Kranju, upon invitation of the Slovenian presidency of the Council of EU, on 5 July 2021 gathered all six Western Balkans ministers in charge of transport around the table. Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy - Western Balkans perspective and Green Lanes implementation were



*Figure 6. Ministerial Council, 5 July 2021 in Brdo pri Kranju*

welcomed by all participants of this meeting as well as the Action Plan for Waterborne Transport and Multimodality and Annex I update were endorsed. Ministers welcomed the Conclusions of the Social Forum of the Transport Community and the establishment of the first Phase of the Road Safety Observatory for the Western Balkans region. Bearing in mind that 2021 was the European Year of Rail, transport ministers gathered again in September 2021 in Belgrade for the Rail Summit and again in October in Montenegro to review the yearly progress on Action Plans implementation.

During 2021, four Regional Steering Committee<sup>12</sup> meetings (February, May, October and December) were organised, to review progress reports and endorse documents of the Transport Community.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Social Forum took place on 25 February 2021, focusing on social legislation in the field of rail and passenger rights in rail transport. Additional to the Forum, the Transport Community has organised the first kick-off meeting on Women in Transport - the Balkans Perspective.

The Technical Committee on Railway was organised three times. One of the most important achievements of the work of this Technical Committee is launching the first regional project on safety improvement of the road-rail level crossings along the Regional rail network. The main outcome of the project should be the mapping of the most critical points on the railway network and proposing improvements. During 2021, Bosnia and Herzegovina chaired the Technical Committee on Railways.

The first Technical Committee for Waterborne Transport and Multimodality was held on 30 November 2021 in Pristina. The most important outcome of the 1<sup>st</sup> technical meeting was the agreement on the milestones for 2022 and the country-based approach in terms of achievements, especially regarding acquis transposition as defined by the Action Plan.

In 2021, the Road Technical Committee held three meetings. Bosnia and Herzegovina held the chair of the Road Technical Committee during 2021. During the first two meetings of 2021, the Technical Committee

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/ministerial-council/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/regional-steering-committee/>

discussed the progress of the implementation of the Road Action Plan measures, identified Technical Assistance as a follow up to Roadshows, as well as continued to exchange best practices between Regional Partners and EU Member States (EU MS). The main deliverable of the last meeting of 2021 of the Road Technical Committee was the approval of the Progress report on the Implementation of the Road Action Plan.

The Road Safety Technical Committee meetings were focused on monitoring and following up the implementation of the Road Safety Action Plan, as well as the exchange of good practices from EU Member States and within the Region. The main achievement of this work was finalisation of the CONNECTA Technical Assistance on Improvement of High-Risk Road Sections and the establishment of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory (WBRSO). During 2021, three Technical Committee meetings were held, as well as two meetings of the WBRSO. The second meeting of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory was held in back-to-back with the Road Safety Conference on 6-7 December 2021 in Skopje.

The coordination for implementing the Action Plan on Transport Facilitation is done through the Transport Facilitation Technical Committee, which held three meetings in the course of 2021. The COVID-19 impact on transport and logistic chains in the Region and EU was the most prominent topic at all meetings of the Technical Committee held in 2021, focusing on waiting times at borders and challenges on the implementation of the Transport Facilitation Action Plan, but also on the establishment of joint border controls and the needed technical assistance.

Conclusions of all Technical Committee meetings are uploaded and can be found on TCT Secretariat website<sup>13</sup>.

Budget Committee had its two ordinary meetings reviewing the Transport Community budget execution and providing advice and guidance to the Permanent Secretariat on financial matters.

The two remaining Action Plans Roadshows, respectively in Pristina and Podgorica, took place in January and February 2021. Besides the detailed discussion on the Action Plans, Technical Assistance needs of the Regional Participants were identified, to support the implementation of the Action Plans.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/technical-committees/>

## 12. ACQUIS TRANSPOSITION

Annex I to Transport Community Treaty includes an extensive list of EU *acquis* that needs to be transposed and implemented by the Regional Partners in order to achieve further integration of the respective transport markets. The Treaty provides also for a stepwise approach, in which the Regional Steering Committee, assisted by the Technical Committees, streamlines the pace of implementation activities.



Figure 7. EU *acquis* workshop in Serbia, 2021

Needs for further transposition and implementation of the EU *acquis*, were analysed through series of workshops organised in the region (5 Regional Partners): Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia. The last workshop to be conducted in Albania is planned in 2022, and several videoconferences with Albania already took place in 2021.

As a result of the workshops, topics for immediate action were selected, upon the needs and requests of the regional participants.

A general finding from all the workshops is the lack of human resources allocated to implement the EU *acquis*. Further support in this regard is needed to support regional partners to further develop their capacities/know in the area of road transport legislation enforcement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo requested support on waterborne transport issues. More precisely Bosnia and Herzegovina requested support in drafting the maritime legislation, whereas Kosovo has requested a support in establishing a unit dealing with maritime transport. Support related to railway institutional framework on establishing and restructuring the railway sector and establishing new companies such as National Investigation Body, National Safety Authority and Rail Regulatory Agency, was requested by Albania.

One of the most urgent needs identified was concerning enforcement of EU *Acquis* applicable for transport as a professional service, and, in particular the tachograph rules, driving and resting times of drivers. Permanent Secretariat took direct actions to address this issue, by organising a workshop jointly with the Polish Inspectorate in Belgrade, in December 2021, in order to exchange experience with the authorities from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. For other three regional partners, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania similar workshop is planned to be organised in March 2022.

Contacts and structured cooperation were established with several stakeholders such as the Polish General Directorate of Road Transport Inspection (Inspekcja Transportu Drogowego), Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET) and Polish Railways (PKP) who acknowledged their willingness to offer further support to the Regional Partners on their path to the EU and transposing/implementing EU *Acquis*.

### 13. CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

A series of trainings concerning the use of the EUR-LEX platform, entitled EU Law Hub was organised on 21 May 2021 and 25 June 2021 to allow officials for the South-East European Parties to TCT to acquire more knowledge concerning the information already available online on EU *acquis*. The training was opened to officials active in all areas of transport in the Regional Partners and advertised with all relevant Technical Committees that are involved in transposition of EU Law. The trainer from the Publication's Office of the European Union presented the structure of the EUR-Lex platform, in particular the methods to be used in order to simplify the identification of secondary legislation, amending acts and transposition measures of the EU Member States. This hands-on training allowed the officials of the Regional Partners to also understand more about the European Union decision-making process and the way this is reflected. Taking into account the efforts of transparency of the EU and Member States alike in terms of access to EU legislation and its implementation, the two sessions were an excellent exercise of awareness raising and capacity building, as confirmed in the reactions of some participants.

The 2021 TCT capacity building Rail Summer School<sup>14</sup> was organised by TCT and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung from 29 June until 02 July 2021 in Belgrade, during which 25 participants coming from all six South-East European Parties participated. The main focus of the lectures was on the current rail policies and developments at the EU level, EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, innovations and digitalisation in the rail industry and practical training on FIDIC Contract management.



*Figure 8. Closing Ceremony of the 2021 Rail Summer School*

To better explain the current EU *acquis* that has to be transposed and implemented in road transport, and in order to enhance road safety in the region while ensuring a level playing field for commercial transport, a Road Transport Enforcement Workshop was organised for 3 Regional Participants – Serbia, Bosnia and

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/rail-summer-school-2021/>



Herzegovina and Montenegro, in cooperation with the Polish Embassy in Belgrade and the General Inspectorate of Road Transport in Warsaw. The workshop was done in December 2021 in Belgrade and focused on the essential requirements concerning tachograph enforcement activities, thus allowing inspectors to understand better the EU applicable rules concerning driving time and rest periods of drivers, use of analogue and digital tachographs and mobile inspection units, and also the regime of periodic roadworthiness tests of vehicles. A subsequent event is planned in 2022 for the remaining 3 Regional Participants – Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia, to be organised in Skopje.

The First TAIEX Regional Workshop on Transport of Dangerous Goods was organised at the request of Kosovo. Courtesy of the Commission Services, DG NEAR and DG MOVE, the Regional Workshop on Transport of Dangerous Goods was held on 6-7 December 2021, thus allowing a valuable exchange of experience between experts working in the field in Germany and Poland and experts in the Western Balkans. The training presented the administrative structures put in place for transport of dangerous goods in Germany and Poland, and then followed with a detailed presentation of the safety obligations of the participants in TDG, classification of dangerous goods, exemptions system, role of the dangerous goods safety adviser, accident reports, requirements for the approval and construction of specialized vehicles, packaging, rules for labelling, placarding and marking. In the end, the TDG activities in TCPS were briefly presented also. Further activities for capacity building on transport of dangerous goods will be organised in 2022 and preparatory activities started already with the Ministry of Interior in Montenegro view to a training for firefighters concerning intervention in case of accident and incident with transport of dangerous goods.



*Figure 9. TAIEX Workshop on Inland Transport of Dangerous Goods*

Preparatory activities for another two TAIEX workshops were conducted in 2021 and implementation shall take place in 2022. TAIEX workshop that is already approved by the European Commission is planned for

March 2022, concerns all the legislation relevant to the Border Crossing Points. The workshop will be conducted in Montenegro with a visit to JBCP in Tuzi and will be addressed to all 6 Regional Participants.

The subsequent TAIEX workshop, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Railway Package, with invitation to all 6 Regional Participants to take part is designed to take place in Albania.

TAIEX Expert Mission on Management of Recognised Organisations was organised in co-operation with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania and was held in the premises of the Durres Port Authority from 18 - 22 October 2021. The aim of the expert mission was to provide advice and guidance to the representatives of the Albanian Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy responsible for maritime transport policies about the requirements to improve the Albanian Flag Administration. The TAIEX expert shared his expertise about best EU practices for the assessment, recognition and monitoring of the Recognised Organisations. The expert also provided advice on the legal requirements to align national legislation with EU standards and legal provisions, with a particular focus on the legal framework to improve the cooperation between the Maritime Administration and the Recognised Organisations. The mission was held as a live event with participation of over 20 people.

In line with the Waterborne and Multimodality Action Plan, as well as Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, project generation workshop on sharing experiences and best practices of EU Core Network Maritime Ports in developing and implementing EU funded projects was held in Rijeka, on 24 September 2021. The idea of the workshop was to showcase the variety of success stories implemented by the Port of Rijeka Authority since EU membership, ranging from policy, strategic planning, project development, creating partnerships with other EU ports and project implementation. The representatives of Maritime Core ports of the extended TEN-T network, Albania's Port of Durres and Montenegro's Port of Bar largely benefited from exchange of knowledge on how to design, disseminate and develop successful projects as well as explaining the step-by-step procedure of Project Cycle Management in EU context. The workshop facilitated a deeper dialogue between the participants and possible future project partners on some upcoming calls for proposals. The participants were able to discuss and reflect on the lessons learned presented by the Port of Rijeka Authority, while learning how these may be transferred to their own Ports.



*Figure 10. Project generation workshop on sharing experiences and best practices of EU Core Network Maritime Ports in developing and implementing EU funded projects, 24 September 2021 in Rijeka*



#### 14. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical Assistance to connectivity in the Western Balkans (CONNECTA) for developing Detail designs for improving road safety conditions on high-risk road sections in the TEN-T core/comprehensive network of Western Balkans, for 10 high-risk sections with an approximate length of 300 km was finalised in February 2021. The Transport Community Secretariat together with the EU Commission (DG NEAR, MOVE and EIB) is currently discussing the potential financial modalities that will support the works for improvement of these high-risk sections.

The Permanent Secretariat of Transport Community received technical support from Federale Internationale d'Automobile for establishing of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory. The work commenced in February 2021 and ended in June 2021. The World Bank joined this consultancy work which resulted with two main deliverables: Three-Year Working Plan for WBRSO and Regional Participants Profiles for 2019. The Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory is defined as a joint initiative of different Regional Partners united with the common goal to improve their road safety data systems and to interchanging data to help create a solid body of evidence-based practice. Technical Assistance for the developing an information system for Western Balkan Road Safety Observatory will be carried out during 2022 while the tender procedures are finalized by end of 2021 year.

To support the implementation of the Road Action Plan and support the Region in the green and digital transition of the road sector, in close cooperation with Regional Partners, Technical Assistance was identified and put in motion. Technical Assistance is financed through the TCT Secretariat budget line for this purpose and from DG NEAR EU Technical Assistance CONNECTA. The current state of play is provided below:

- Preparation of Strategy/Policy documents concerning ITS for all transport modes for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo for rail and maritime in Albania and for rail in Montenegro: The TCT Secretariat prepared the application form, scope of work for this assignment and were submitted through CONNECTA to DGNEAR. Approval from DGNEAR is expected in January 2022. The expected start of the assignment is by February 2022.
- The baseline assessment and financial impact on e-tolling interoperability in the Western Balkans is financed through TCT Secretariat budget. Tendering procedures started in September and were finalised in December 2021. The Consultant was selected and the expected start of assignment is in January 2022.

The ultimate goal of the Transport Community Secretariat is that there should be no more deaths or seriously injured because of road accidents on railway crossings. Therefore, together with JASPERS, the Transport Community Secretariat and all Regional Partners, initiated the Project for Level Crossing Safety Improvements. The Project will consist of "soft" and "infrastructure improvements" measures. Soft measures will include mapping of the most critical level crossings in the region (numbers, allocation, traffic flow, number of accidents, fatalities etc.), public and educational awareness campaign and legal framework changes. Therefore, the TCT Secretariat contracted a specialised agency, which will help the

Secretariat, together with the Regional Partners, to create and perform this public awareness campaign for level crossing safety improvements in the course of 2022.

TCT Secretariat contracted Technical Assistance for capacity building in management and operations of the border crossing points along the TEN-T Network in the Western Balkans. The specific objective of this assignment is to prepare and/or complete the legal framework for the Regional Participants to introduce joint or one stop control systems at the road and rail BCPs, and to assist them in setting the appropriate institutional framework, as well as to increase the capacities of the central bodies and of the border agencies in performing joint border controls.

Regarding the Technical Assistance for preparation of technical documentation for modernisation and infrastructure's capacity improvements of selected road border crossing points (BCP) on the extended TEN-T network in the Western Balkans, the application by the TCT Secretariat was approved by the EC (DG NEAR) and the Scope of Work has been prepared. The TA will be carried out by CONNECTA once the final approval is received and the experts are mobilised, which is expected by early 2022.

In order to enable green and digital transformation of the transport sector and based on the consultation with the Regional Parties, two technical Assistance have been identified. One technical assistance is related to deployment of electronic freight information exchange and is to be financed from the TCT budget, while the other is related to conduct impact assessment and cost effectiveness analysis of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans, to be financed from DG NEAR EU Technical Assistance CONNECTA. The current state of play:

- Technical assistance for deployment of e - freight in Western Balkans and implementation of the Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 on electronic freight transport information. Procurement procedure started in October and was completed in December 2021. The expected start of the project is January 2022.
- Technical assistance for the deployment of sustainable and smart mobility in the Western Balkans (component 1 impact assessment and cost effectiveness analysis). The TCT Secretariat prepared the application form and scope of work for this assignment and they were submitted through CONNECTA to DG NEAR. Approval from DG NEAR is expected in January 2022. The expected start of the assignment is in February 2022.

## 15. WESTERN BALKAN INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

The TCT Secretariat participated in all the meetings of the WBIF Steering Committee and experts group on the improvement of the implementation of projects in the Western Balkans, led by the World Bank. Within this framework, the TCT Secretariat assessed through WBIF MIS the Regional Partners' applications to WBIF for Technical Assistance and Investment Grants.

Furthermore, active participation of the TCT Secretariat was ensured in all the meetings of the Transport Sub-committees in close cooperation with DG NEAR and DG MOVE.

## COMMUNICATION

In 2021, the TCT Secretariat intensified its outreach to and exchanges with the institutional stakeholders, EU, other international organisations and IFIs. The First Western Balkans Rail Summit, the 4<sup>th</sup> Transport Community Ministerial Council and the International Maritime Day were three main events that received objective and considerable media coverage in outlets across the Region. The most extensive reports usually appeared in media where the events took place, but also in other Regional Partners, proving once again that TCT is an organisation serving citizens in all six Regional Partners. On the occasion of Rail Summit, an event video was produced and widely distributed <https://www.transport-community.org/2021/10/06/video-western-balkans-rail-summit/>.

The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat continued publication of its monthly newsletter (*Annex I*), which was regularly distributed to all stakeholders and available to the public via subscription on the TCT website. This practice will continue throughout 2022 as well. To achieve the best possible flow of information, the TCT Secretariat initiated redesign of its website so that it can offer more content, better visibility and be more user-friendly. Visits to current website have increased more than 100% during 2021, totalling more than 100,000 visits at the end of the year. In accordance with the TCT Communication Strategy, interviews with TCT officials and articles about TCT work were published in all major newspapers in the Western Balkans.

Social media accounts were updated regularly to reflect work of the dynamic organisation that can respond quickly to new developments and inform the public about its work in a timely manner. The number of followers and engagement increased on all platforms in 2021, further strengthening the reputation of TCT Secretariat as a modern international organisation, which is keeping track of developments in the modern digital age. Similar to the importance and influence of television on the public in the Western Balkans, Facebook remained a social network with the highest number of users region-wide, followed by Instagram. In addition to the TCT Facebook account, which was opened in 2021, Transport Community will launch an Instagram page in 2022, to coincide with the launch of the public awareness raising campaign to improve safety of level crossings in the Region. Although Twitter is the least used social network in the Region, its impact was high and allowed the TCT Secretariat to react quickly to latest developments in the Region and beyond. Both the official TCT account and the Director's Twitter account doubled its followers in 2021. More importantly, the engagement rate from leading experts in the field of transport has been significant, allowing the news about TCT work to reach even bigger number of followers. Our social media posts have started discussions about the transport in Western Balkans and what can be done to improve the current situation. The Director has personally engaged in some social media discussions, demonstrating our organisation's openness for dialogue at all levels.

Key documents were also printed and distributed to participants at meetings and conferences. Regarding internal communication, TCT developed Communication Guidelines, ensuring that all members of TCT staff are familiar with communication procedures and standards for writing.

## ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL

### 1. HUMAN CAPITAL

At the beginning of 2021, 3 new TCT officials started working in the Secretariat dealing with: passenger rights and social issues (1 official), with waterborne transport and multimodality (1 official) as well as the one dealing with transport *acquis* and legal issues.

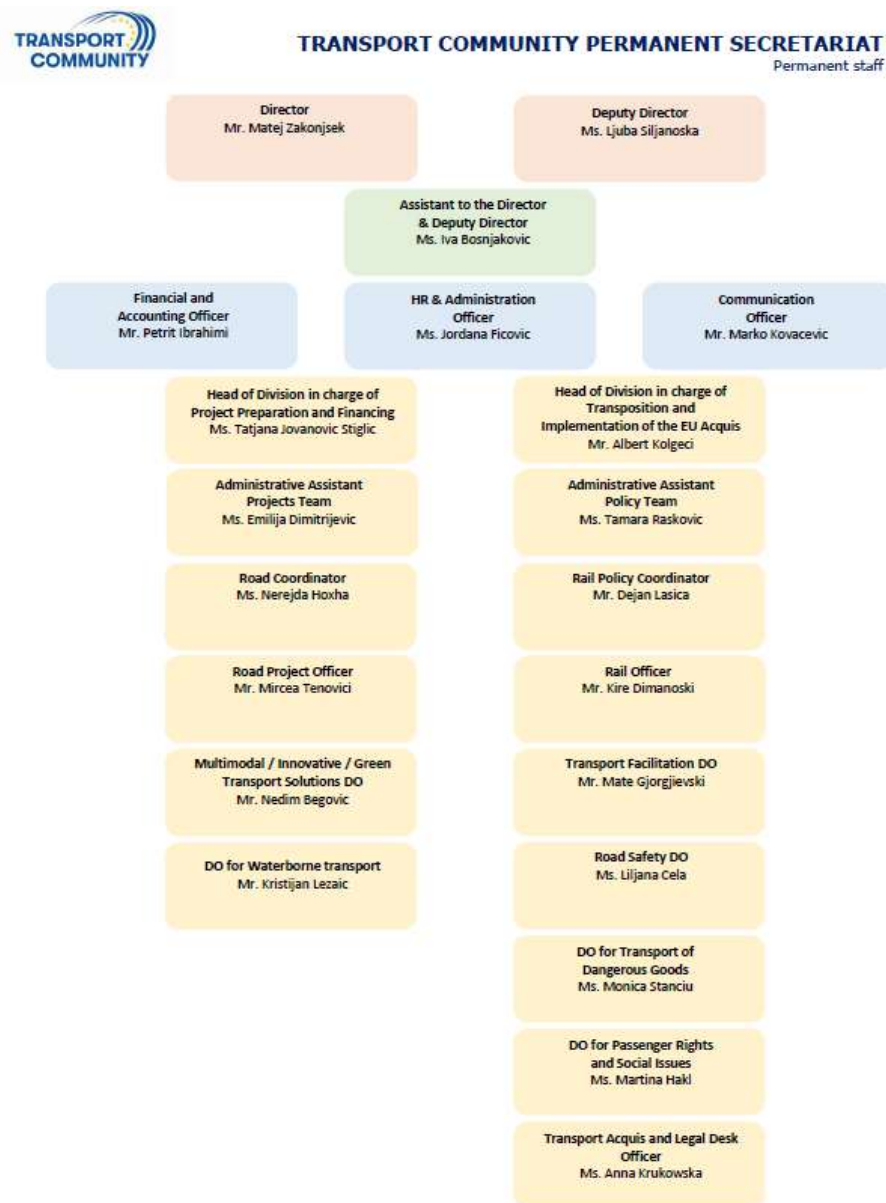
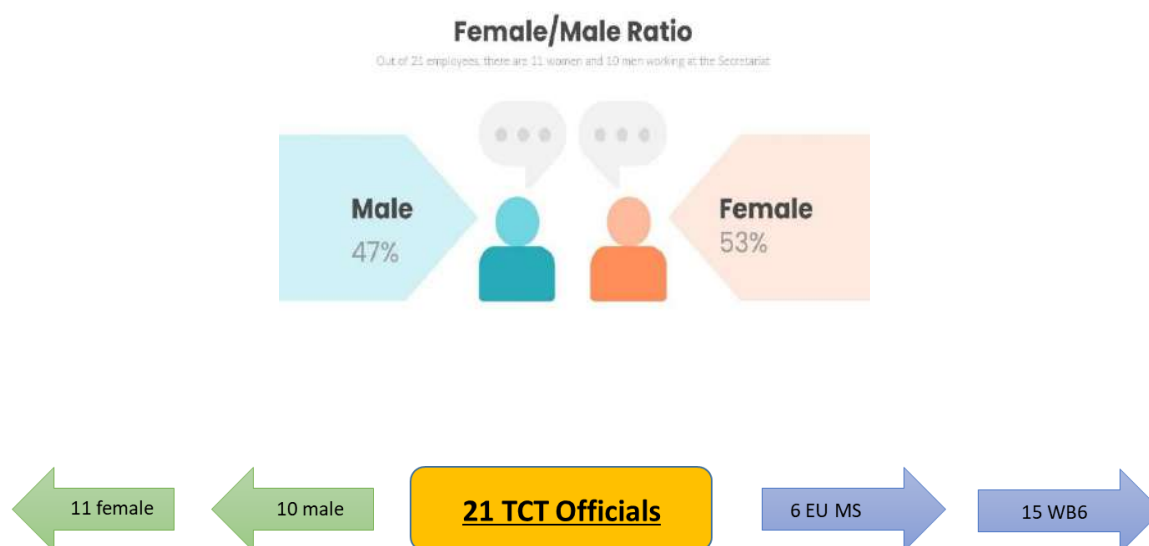


Figure 11. TCT Secretariat Organigram

As of February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 TCT Secretariat has 21 officials - gender balance goes slightly in favor of female officials – 11 out of 21, while in geographical balance WB6 prevails:



*Figure 12. Human capital of the Permanent secretariat*

Breakdown of TCT Officials per defined categories (as per Staff Regulations):

- Director 1
- Deputy Director 1
- Head of Division 2
- Experts 14
- Assistant to the Director 1
- Administrative Assistants 2

HR software license has been purchased in 2021 in the frames of Enterprise Resource Planning system in order to keep electronic track record of the personal files of the employees.

## 2. ADMINISTRATION

Due to the renovation activities of “Beogradjanka” building, where, according to the HQ Agreement, the TCT Secretariat premises were located, the Secretariat in agreement with the host country was temporary resettled to another location in 2021. At the end of 2021, relocation took place back to the original premises defined in the Headquarters Agreement. The seat of the Secretariat is again located in the business building “Beogradjanka”, Masarikova 5, Floor 8, Belgrade.

In the course of 2021 set of rules of procedures with financial implications were drafted and adopted by the Regional Steering Committee, needed for the day-to-day operations of the Permanent Secretariat in line with the Treaty and Transport community Staff Regulations. Adopted rules in 2021 are regularly published at the TCT webpage - <https://www.transport-community.org/regional-steering-committee/>:

- Rules on the Reimbursement of Expenses incurred by persons from outside the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community who are invited to participate in meetings of the Transport Community – Decision no. 2 of the RSC;
- Rules on the Reimbursement of Staff of the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community for Travel and Relocation Costs upon taking up duties and termination of service – RSC Decision no. 3;
- Rules on the Contribution of the Transport Community to the Health, Unemployment, Pension and Disability Insurance for staff of the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community – Decision no. 4 of the Regional Steering Committee.

During 2021, the Secretariat continued closely to monitor the Covid-19 situation development and regularly updated its internal COVID guidelines to reflect the situation in the host country. All TCT Officials were provided with vaccination opportunity as soon vaccines became available in Serbia.

In 2021 Transparency Register was introduced and the TCT Secretariat made public information on all meetings with organisations or self-employed individuals on issues relating to transport policymaking. Transparency register is available of the Transport Community webpage (“Transparency Register”<sup>15</sup>). Within 2021, 32 meetings are listed in the register.

Following the Staff Regulations, Article 3.7, a Gift Registry was introduced in the Secretariat.

During 2021 the Secretariat implemented a contract for ICT Consulting Services, aiming to assess the current ICT infrastructure of the Secretariat and obtain recommendations for improvement. The assessment conducted resulted in a comprehensive report which outlined the current state of play of hardware and software, as well as recommendations on next steps in terms of development, for example analyses of ‘on premise’ vs. ‘cloud based’ infrastructure. The report also included an overview of the role of a potential ICT Specialist to be recruited if needs arise. The second part of the assessment resulted in

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/transparency-register/>





the development of an ICT Manual for the Secretariat which contains a wide range of ICT policies & procedures to be followed by staff.

Since the beginning of 2021, the TCT Secretariat has established a proper tracking of the correspondence by introducing internal document registry. This document registry consists of 3 components: the Secretariat mail registry, internal documents registry and Transport Community documents registry.

### 3. STAFF TRAINING

As part of the above-mentioned ICT assessment, a staff survey was conducted and the results were incorporated in the final Report. The survey was aimed at assessing the current level of knowledge of staff on IT hardware, software and a special focus was given to security issues. Based on the results of the survey, a tailored 2-hour training was organised for the Secretariat staff, covering the topics of the survey, with an accent on IT security.

In the last quarter of 2021, a staff away day - teambuilding exercise was organised by the Secretariat. "Building the Bridge" exercise aimed to enhance teamwork and improve internal and external communication techniques. Modern organisational psychology techniques were used in order to improve staff skills for working as a part of the team and but as well individually dealing with various stakeholders.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The year 2021 was a period of further consolidation and enhancement of the legal framework, technical and operational capacities for the purpose of strengthening the internal oversight, expenditure control and timely and accurate reporting.

An Enterprise Resource Planning system has been implemented in line with requirements deriving from the Financial Rules. Furthermore, templates have been developed, internal administrative/financial instructions have been issued, electronic approval processes for official travel and purchase requests have been implemented aiming for increased efficiency of workflow and reduced paperwork.

### 1. AUDIT OF 2020 ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The Independent External Auditor's Report on the 2020 annual financial statements of the Transport Community was issued on 24 June 2021 and communicated to the members of the Budget Committee and Regional Steering Committee (hereinafter "RSC") on 29 June 2021. Auditor's opinion states:

*In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Permanent Secretariat of The Transport Community as at 31 December 2020 and of its financial performance and its cash flow for the year ending on 31 December 2020 in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and in the manner required by Annex 1 of tender specification, (PS/SRV/AUD/001/2021).*

The financial statements and auditor's report are publicly available on the internet<sup>16</sup>.

### 2. THE BUDGET COMMITTEE

During 2021, the Budget Committee held two meetings: on 31 March and 16 November 2021. Both meetings took place virtually. The Permanent Secretariat informed the Budget Committee on current standings of budget execution and forecasts, payment of budgetary contributions, preparations for budget of the subsequent fiscal year, arguments for amending Financial Rules etc.

The topics discussed included proposed rules with financial implications and plans for proposing modifications to the current Financial Rules, including an Annex on covering procurement procedures for contracts valued below the Directive threshold.

The Budget Committee issued a series of recommendations such as refining the Financial Rules to incorporate the possibility for carrying over budgetary commitments between fiscal years, having multi-annual contracts for external audit services and offering the possibility to Regional Partners for offsetting the surplus from the previous fiscal year against contributions of current and future fiscal years.

In accordance with a conclusion from the RSC meeting of 21 October, upon each meeting of the Budget Committee, the Chair shall participate in the subsequent meeting of the RSC and present to the members

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Auditor-Report-2020.pdf>

of the RSC the discussions and conclusions from the Budget Committee meeting. The first practice of this kind took place during the RSC meeting of 16 December 2021.

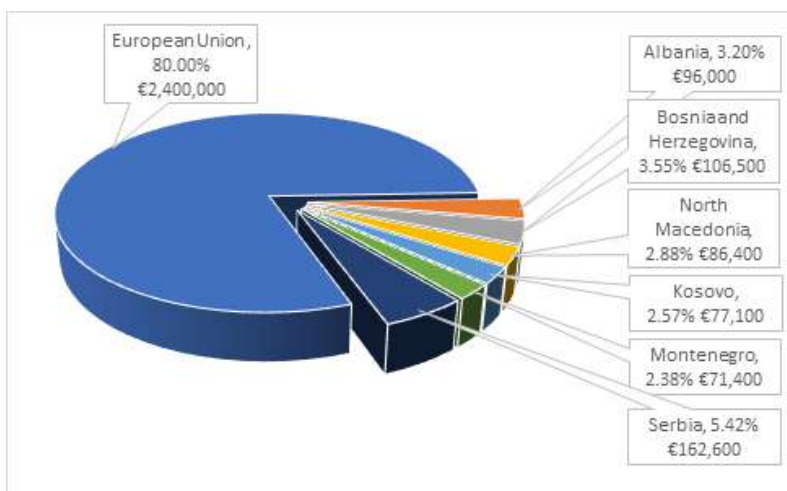
### 3. 2021 BUDGET OF THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY<sup>17</sup>

The first discussions by the RSC took place during the meeting on 8 October 2020 and a follow up discussion was held during the meeting on 15 December 2020. The EU's opinion regarding the adoption of the Budget was adopted on 22 December 2020 and accordingly published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

In line with the Rules of Procedure of the RSC, Part VI, the draft Decision for adoption of the Budget was transmitted to the RSC members for adoption by written correspondence on 22 December 2020. The Budget was adopted on 28 January 2021 and published<sup>18</sup> on the website of Transport Community.

In accordance with Note No. 14 to the 2020 Annual Financial Statements of Transport Community on the Calculation of unused budgetary appropriations and amounts repayable to contracting parties, the Permanent Secretariat has repaid to the European Union the respective amount for financial years 2019 and 2020. Whereas the amounts repayable to the Regional Partners have been offset against the 2021 budgetary contributions. The latter has been conducted based on prior preference of Regional Partners and official exchange of letters.

The European Union and all Regional Partners have fulfilled their obligations towards the budgetary contributions for the 2021 Budget of Transport Community.



*Figure 13. Budgetary contributions for 2021*

<sup>17</sup> The annual financial statements have not been finalized at the time when this document is issued. Information on the Budget 2021 execution shall be additionally provided.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Decision-01-2021.pdf>

Budget Line	Initial Budget	Budget Transfers	Final Budget	Actual amounts	Legal Commitments	Total Expenditure	Impl. rate	Unused appropriations
<b>1 Permanent Secretariat</b>		-	-			-		-
1.1 Human Resources	1,465,706	-	1,465,706	1,385,606.13	-	1,385,606	94.54%	80,100
1.2 Travel Costs	172,560	(17,256)	155,304	58,201.44	-	58,201	37.48%	97,103
1.3 Office costs, equipment and software	303,080	72,420	375,500	12,329.90	345,685	358,015	95.34%	17,485
1.4 Other costs and services	247,590	(15,164)	232,426	118,250.19	43,850	162,100	69.74%	70,326
1.5 Studies, Technical Assistance	400,000	(40,000)	360,000	9,750.00	301,500	311,250	86.46%	48,750
<b>2 Ministerial Council</b>		-	-		-	-		-
2.1 Meeting and conference costs	60,000	-	60,000	17,093.70	-	17,094	28.49%	42,906
<b>3 Regional Steering Committee</b>		-	-		-	-		-
3.1 Meeting and conference costs	20,950	-	20,950	7,377.88	-	7,378	35.22%	13,572
<b>4 Technical Committees</b>		-	-		-	-		-
4.1 Meeting and conference costs	99,100	-	99,100	6,239.47	-	6,239	6.30%	92,861
<b>5 Social Forum</b>		-	-		-	-		-
5.1 Meeting and conference costs	13,300	-	13,300	-	-	-	0.00%	13,300
Reserve (approx. 8%)	217,714	-	217,714	-	-	-	0.00%	217,714
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>3,000,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,000,000</b>	<b>1,614,848.71</b>	<b>691,035</b>	<b>2,305,884</b>	<b>76.86%</b>	<b>694,116</b>

Figure 14. Preliminary budget execution report for 2021

#### 4. 2022 BUDGET OF THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY

Preparations were launched in February 2021. The 2022 Budget of Transport Community has been approved by the RSC on 16 December 2021 for a total amount of EUR 3,002,105 excluding carry overs from 2021. The adoption Decision and the budget can be publicly accessed on the following link<sup>19</sup>.

The 2022 Budget shall be financed through contributions in accordance with Annex V of the Treaty establishing the Transport Community.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/20211217145743357.pdf>



## Annex I

*TCT Permanent Secretariat Newsletters  
January- December 2021*

## January 2021

The year 2021 started with the Action Plan Roadshow in Kosovo\* on 11 January. Following the opening of the workshop, a visit of the EU-funded modernisation project of rail Route 10 was organised, together with Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti and Minister of Infrastructure Arban Abrashi. Officials of the highest level expressed political support for the work of the Transport Community, including our efforts to improve road safety in the region.



A day later in Belgrade (12.01), Director Zakonjsek met with the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Minister of Transport Tomislav Momirovic to discuss the developments of the regional transport network and transport connections of the Western Balkans with the EU. Director Zakonjsek presented the priorities of the Transport Community, while President Vucic expressed full support for the extension of Green Lanes to the borders between Western Balkans and the EU, emphasising that it was essential for Serbia to implement this initiative on its busiest borders with Croatia and Hungary.



Visit to Montenegro took place on 15 January for the first official meeting with the newly appointed Minister of Capital Investments, Mladen Bojanic. The meeting was an opportunity to highlight support for flagship projects in Montenegro, including Belgrade-Podgorica-Bar railway, Sarajevo-Podgorica motorway, railway to Tirana and the Blue Highway along the Adriatic coast. Minister Bojanic agreed to open the Action Plan Roadshow in Podgorica on 19 February.

During the visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 21 January, the ongoing activities on Corridor Vc – one of the most important transport links in the Western Balkans – were reviewed. Once operational, the Svilaj



Bridge, connecting BiH to its EU neighbour Croatia, will be an important segment on Corridor Vc, the first major motorway and the largest ever infrastructure project in the country's history. The Director Zakonjsek also met with the President of the Council of Ministers Zoran Tegeltija to highlight the importance of high-level dialogue with Croatia, which will be essential as two countries work together to minimise waiting times at their borders.

\*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.



Our work on extending Green Lanes to the EU continued. During a productive meeting on 18 January, the following was agreed: list of border crossings between WB and the EU, list of priority PPE goods and medicine, continuation of syncing of working hours of border agencies, as well as electronic exchange of data. The next meeting is scheduled for 5 February 2021.

In January 2021, the Transport Community also organised successful Technical Committee meetings on Transport of Dangerous Goods (20 January), Railway (21 January), Road Safety (22 January), Transport Facilitation (25 January) and Road (27 January):

- The first Technical Committee on Transport of Dangerous Goods concluded that, in order to ensure safe and secure transport of dangerous goods in Western Balkans, formal guidelines (in line with the EU standards) are needed;
- Eighth Technical Committee on Railway analysed implementation of the Transport Community Rail Action Plan, impact of Covid19 on rail and the possibility of establishing night train connections in the Western Balkans;
- Sixth Technical Committee on Road Safety reiterated our dedication to Vision Zero by 2050, the need for national Road Safety Strategies, standardised data collection methods and implementation of awareness raising campaigns;
- Extension of Green Lanes to the EU was the focus of the Technical Committee on Transport Facilitation. Galileo app, EU-funded System of Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED) and Transport Community's monitoring of waiting times were highlighted as useful tools that will facilitate this process;
- Concrete regional initiatives (road weather stations in Serbia and road asset management in North Macedonia) were presented at the fourth Technical Committee on Road. Participants were also acquainted with the EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and its application in the region.

On 25 January, Transport Community's work was presented at the European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism. Road safety, moving cargo from roads to rail, integrating green and smart elements on roads, as well as Green Lanes expansion to the EU were the main topics of the session.

EUSAIR's Belgrade Forum and panel "The Impact of Covid-19 on Transport and Mobility in the Adriatic-Ionian Region" was an occasion to present how the health pandemic affected transport and mobility and what perspectives can be envisaged for the future. Green Lanes again featured prominently as a great example of regional cooperation that can be improved and utilised even after the pandemic is over.

We continued our cooperation with the civil society. During an online event organised by the Global Alliance of Road Safety NGOs, we presented Transport Community's road safety initiatives in the Western Balkans and initiated plans to mark the UN Global Road Safety Week (17-23 May).

February Highlights: 12 February – Regional Steering Committee, 19 February – Podgorica Roadshow, 25 February - Social Forum (Social Issues in Rail)



## February 2021

The European Year of Rail 2021 started in the Western Balkans on 3 February in Albania. The first large-scale overhaul of the railway network began with the signing of a contract for rehabilitation works between the state railways and the Italian company INC Spa. This project is supported by the European Union with an investment grant of €35.5 million under 'Connectivity Agenda for the Western Balkans' and by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) with a €36.9 million loan. The railway section in Albania is an extension of the Mediterranean Corridor, a part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). Under the contract more than 34 km of the existing railway track between Tirana and the port of Durrës will be rehabilitated. Additionally, a new 7.4 km-long rail track connecting Tirana city to the Tirana International Airport will be constructed. This project is also identified as one of the flagship projects of Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, published by the European Commission in October last year. The Transport Community strongly supports and will continue promoting success stories such as this one.



Importance of rail reforms in the region was highlighted in the interview of the Permanent Secretariat Director Zakonjsek for the Media Information Agency (MIA) in North Macedonia. <https://www.transport-community.org/2021/02/14/interview-matej-zakonjsek-director>. Upon invitation of the Head of EU Delegation Ambassador David Geer, we presented the Transport Community priorities for the 2021 at the meeting of Heads of Missions of EU member states accredited to North Macedonia.



The last stop of the Action Plan Roadshow (workshop) took place on 19 February in Podgorica. Following the opening of the workshop, a visit to Bar-Boljare highway construction site was organised together with the Minister of Capital Investments Mr Mladen Bojanic. The visit provided a great opportunity to highlight to Montenegrin public the importance of flagship infrastructure projects such as rail connections from Podgorica to Belgrade and to

Tirana, the road from Podgorica to Sarajevo and the so-called Blue Highway along the Adriatic Coast, all of which are part of European Commission's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.



On 25 February, Transport Community organised the 2nd Social Forum focused on social issues in rail transport. The online event was opened by Transport Commissioner Ms Adina Ioana Vălean, who noted the importance of the Social Agenda in transport sector. Participants committed to promote social dialogue by referencing the EU acquis in social matters, workers' fundamental rights and involvement of the European Economic and Social Committee and national and European social partners in rail transport.

The work on extending Green Lanes to the borders between Western Balkans and the EU member states depends on establishing good bilateral relations with EU neighbours. During the meeting on 11 February, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Mr Nikola Selakovic confirmed Serbia's dedication to economic prosperity based on regional cooperation and the extension of Green Lanes to Serbia's borders with Hungary, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The Permanent Secretariat continues to strengthen the inter-institutional cooperation and discussed organisation of joint events for promoting regional cooperation with the Central European Initiative (CEI).

On 12 February, an important meeting of Regional Steering Committee of Transport Community was held online. Both the EU and Western Balkans versions of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy were presented to showcase how the EU and Western Balkan transport system can achieve its green and digital transformation and become more resilient to future crises. Initial discussions on establishment of Technical Committee on Waterborne Transport, as well as talks on organisation of the Ministerial Council and the Social Forum took place.



Road Traffic Victims President Mr Jeannot Mersch, we presented our Road Safety Action Plan and plans to mark the UN Road Safety Week.

The month of February also brought continuation of focus on road safety. The work of the Permanent Secretariat was presented to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Executive Secretary Ms Olga Algayerova and the United Nations Special Representative for Road Safety Mr Jean Todt, highlighting the efforts to remove the dangerous road sections in the region. UNECE Executive Secretary voiced support for the Permanent Secretariat's border monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic, which proved crucial in keeping the supply chains working. During a meeting with the European Federation of

## March 2021



**COVID-19 pandemic** continues to effect transport across the world. Unfortunately, this is the case also in the Western Balkans. Following introduction of new restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic on the **border of Greece with North Macedonia and Albania**, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat together with CEFTA Secretariat issued a joint press statement on 15 March, urging the authorities of Greece to make all necessary steps to alleviate long waiting lines at border crossings that effect economies of the entire region. In North

Macedonia, the inability to import petroleum products from Thessaloniki could potentially lead to shortages of petroleum, which may have a negative impact on its economy and a domino effect on the overall situation in the Western Balkans. Press release: <https://www.transport-community.org/2021/03/15/press-release-transport-community-and-cefta-secretariats-call-on-greece-to-exempt-the-truck-drivers-from-covid-19-measures/>.

The Transport Community **2021 plans and priorities were presented to the EU Member States** on March 16. Director Zakonjsek highlighted the focus of activities on rail, waterborne transport and multimodality, extension of Green Lanes, road safety and the **Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy- Western Balkans perspective**. The Strategy will serve the region to ensure harmonised approach in making the transport greener, sustainable and healthier for all citizens. Ambassador Pedro Lourtie, Deputy Permanent Representative of Portugal (that is currently holding a rotating Presidency of the Council) ,also voiced support to the Secretariat's work on this strategic document, which will be essential for Western Balkan's economic recovery. Decarbonisation and use of alternative fuels were discussed during a meeting with the **Energy Community** representatives on 10 March in Belgrade. On the same day the Secretariat presented the perspectives on sustainable transport beyond the EU, at a panel organised by the European Transport Workers Federation.



**One-stop border crossings** and their significance for Western Balkans were highlighted in interview for "Ekonomija i biznis" magazine in North Macedonia. Tabanovce-Presevo crossing, where customs and police authorities of Serbia and North Macedonia work together at the same facility, is one of the brightest examples of regional cooperation <https://ekonomijaibiznis.mk/News.aspx?IdNews=23990> (in Macedonian). Importance of coordinated approach to dealing with challenges of COVID-19 pandemic was noted at the meeting with Serbia's Customs Administration Director Branko Radujko, on 26 March. The meeting focused on cross-border traffic between Serbia and Croatia and specifically on concrete steps that could help reducing waiting times at the border

crossing Batrovci / Bajakovo.



An exciting opportunity to exchange views with future leaders of the region came on 17 March during an online discussion with **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) scholarship recipients**. Students from Montenegro and Serbia showed remarkable interest in the work of the Transport Community and asked well-researched, thought-provoking questions during a two-hour online discussion on the topic *Without connections, there are no innovations- the challenges of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat*. A week earlier, a productive meeting was held with KAS representative Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes and the **German Bundestag Member of**

**Parliamnet Marian Wendt**, discussing the Connectivity Agenda in the Western Balkans and potential for future cooperation.

Economic potential of **Green Lanes and their extension to neighbouring EU Member States** were the main topics of interview series coordinated with the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Secretariat. Newspapers and web portals in all six regional partners published the interview, demonstrating regional media's interest in the Transport Community work. Support for the Green Lanes initiative was expressed also by **Romania's Transport Minister Catalin Drula** during an online meeting on 11 March. The Secretariat expressed readiness to facilitate re-establishment of rail passenger transport between Serbia and Romania, as well as construction of TEN-T Route 4 to Timisoara. Press release: <https://www.transport-community.org/2021/03/11/minister-drula-meets-with-transport-community-director-zakonjsek/>

Preparatory activities of the **first Western Balkans Rail Summit**, which shall be organised together the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), continued in March. Productive meetings were held with the host government (Serbia's Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure), in order to jumpstart preparations for this major event in the European Year of Rail.



**Investments in rail** were the main topic of UNIFE seminar on 2 March. Director Zakonjsek noted that linking reforms to infrastructure construction, development of multimodal solutions, creation of regional common rail market and implementation of TCT Rail Action Plan will be essential for region's economic development. Finally, in March the Secretariat also marked the International Women's Day with leading by example and demonstrating gender balanced staff, and by raising a voice for greater inclusion of women in transport.



## April 2021

On 12 April, the Secretariat hosted a trilateral meeting with Ministers from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Vojin Mitrović), Montenegro (Mladen Bojanić) and Serbia (Tomislav Momirović) to discuss how to improve connectivity and reduce waiting times at borders. Minister Bojanić was the first minister of a regional partner to visit the Secretariat's new premises a day earlier for discussions on how to develop the regional transport network and improve Montenegro's links with neighbors. The visit was an opportunity to discuss the establishment of one stop controls on the main crossing between Serbia and Montenegro located on the TEN-T Core Network. Delegation led by Minister of Communications and Transport Vojin Mitrović met on 13 April with the Transport Community team to assess infrastructure projects on Corridor Vc in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Svilaj border crossing, Gradiška bridge - as well as investments in railways. One-stop /integrated border crossings were noted for their potential to strengthen regional cooperation and bring benefits to citizens.



Demining of the area around Save River - another flagship project from the European Commission's investment plan – was emphasised due to its capacity to make waterborne transport of goods a viable option for business.

During a visit to Kosovo\* on 19 April, Director Zakonjšek met with the Minister of Infrastructure Liburn Aliu and Interior Minister Xhelal Sveçla for discussions on road safety, infrastructure projects and the establishment of a regional rail market. Given the small size of the rail market, opening at the regional level would create incentives for cooperation and make the region's railway undertakings better prepared to compete on the EU market in the future. Preparations for the First Western Balkans Rail Summit co-organised with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which will take place on 13



September, continued. In addition to coordinating plans for the arrival of Connecting Europe Express train with the European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), Director Zakonjšek met with Serbia's Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure Tomislav Momirović on 9 April to review progress on rail summit, one of the major events of the European Year of Rail. Negotiating and signing of bilateral agreements on one-stop controls between Serbia and its neighbors was highlighted by both interlocutors as one of the concrete steps that will further strengthen regional cooperation and bring benefits to citizens.

Border crossings Hani i Elezit (Kosovo\* and North Macedonia) will become a joint rail crossing once the remaining protocol is finalised. Albania and Montenegro are looking for ways to define the future model of joint controls at Muriqan/Sukobin and Hani i Hotit/Bozaj. During visits on 23 and 27 April, Transport Community delegation met with the authorities for a productive meetings to evaluate the next steps and facilitate dialogue among regional partners.

\*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.



Expanding of the established **Green Lanes** from Western Balkans to neighbouring EU Member States will require coordination and dialogue. Regional partners' support will be instrumental to achieve this goal. In April, Transport Community held a series of meetings with EU Member States to make progress on this important task. Following the request of the Transport Community and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) to the Greek authorities to alleviate long waiting lines, working hours were extended at border crossing Evozni/Bogorodica. The measure was a welcome step in the right direction that will prevent shortage of essential goods in the region. In addition to coordinating working hours of border agencies, Transport Community is dedicated to facilitating agreements between regional partners and their EU neighbours on the list of border crossings, list of priority PPE goods and medicine, as well as electronic exchange of data.

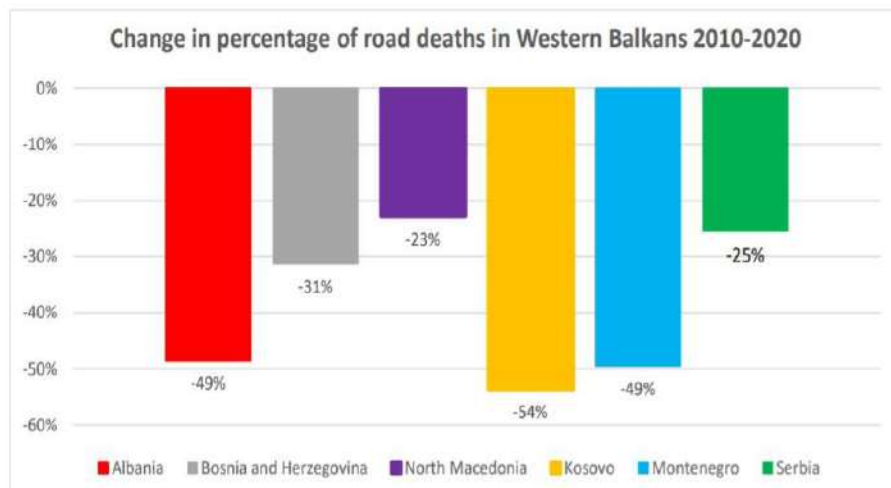


Zero deaths or seriously injured because of road accidents on railway crossings is one of Transport Community's primary goals. To reduce safety risks, increase capacity and performance across the rail network and reduce operational risks for the railways, the Secretariat initiated a **project "Safety Improvement on the Level Crossings in Western Balkans"** together with the six regional partners. The project's "soft" measure will include mapping of the most critical level crossings in the region, public awareness and educational campaigns, as well as new legislation. The project's "hard" measures will involve procurement and

installation of safety equipment on targeted level crossings. The project will be executed in 2021 with the support of

JASPERS – Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions. Transport Community's work on reducing the number of dead and injured in the region was presented at the UN Road Safety Collaboration meeting on 22 April and during a meeting with Serbian Traffic Agency Director. To coincide with the EU's Road Safety Results Conference, the Secretariat published data on road safety in the region: <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Annual-Statistics-2020.pdf> While positive trends were recorded in all six regional partners, it was clear – Vision Zero is still a target we should all aspire to achieve.

**Figure 3: Change in percentage of road deaths in Western Balkans 2010 – 2020**



## May 2021

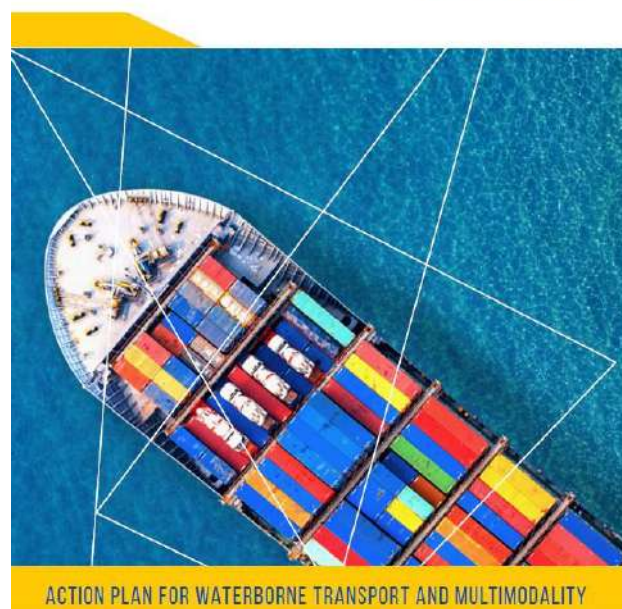
The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) was held on 20 May in hybrid form – live in Belgrade and online. The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat presented its Draft **Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans**. The RSC endorsed the document which will adjust goals, milestones, and actions of the EU to the realities in the region and provide Western Balkans with a roadmap for decarbonisation and digitalisation of its transport sector. The RSC also endorsed the **Action Plan for Waterborne Transport and Multimodality**,



which identifies benefits of greater usage of waterborne and multimodal transport to increase efficiency of transport operations and to achieve lower environmental impact, reduced congestion and lower transport costs. The Waterborne and Multimodality Action Plan, which will supplement the four existing Action Plans of the Transport Community, was presented also at the meeting with the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) Secretary General Isabelle Rykboost on 6 May. Partnership with ESPO is essential to ensure participation of regional ports in EU initiatives and to improve maritime-based logistics chains in Western Balkans. The Port of Durrës, which was recently granted observer status in ESPO, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy launched on 27 May the Centre of Excellence for Maritime Affairs, an initiative supporting careers, research, innovation and regional cooperation in the maritime industry.

During Director Zakonjsek's **visit to Albania**, he attended the official opening of the centre, met with Minister Belinda Balluku, with the CEO of the private rail operator Albrail and with RSC members. The visit was an opportunity for informal meeting with representatives of other regional organisations - the Regional Cooperation Council and the Energy Community. The 6th UN **GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY WEEK** webinar hosted by the Transport Community took place on 18

May. The Transport Community joined the Road Safety Week, which aimed at bringing together NGOs, public and private organisations from around the world to raise awareness about road safety that will impact the reduction of fatalities. The webinar's two panel sessions were an opportunity to bring together stakeholders (the World Bank, WHO, the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety, regional road safety agencies, EU Delegations) to take initiative





towards speed management in urban areas. Lively discussion focused on the challenges that authorities are facing and how we can together improve the situation in the region.

During the road safety week 17-23 May, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat also joined the social media campaign demanding safer streets for all, with focus on 30km/h speed limit. A visit to **Bijeljina municipality** in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place on 21 May. Director Zakonjsek met with Ministers Vojin Mitrovic and Nedeljko Coric to reiterate that low-speed streets save lives and are the heart of any community.

The route of **Connecting Europe Express Train** was unveiled on 9 May, as part of marking the **Europe Day**. The train's stops in Belgrade and Skopje will symbolise



European unity and will raise much-needed awareness about the benefits of rail travel in the region.

On 26 May, Director Zakonjsek took part in a panel "Infrastructure and Connectivity Agenda" in the framework of Kopaonik Business Forum, organised by the Association of Economists. Zakonjsek noted that infrastructure projects can bring long-lasting benefits to the region only if they are coupled with effective policies. The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat will continue to focus on flagship projects mentioned in the European Commission's Economic and

Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and facilitate cooperation among the six regional partners. A week earlier, another **high-level ministerial event** took place online under the auspices of the Austrian Ministry of Climate Action. On this occasion, Director Zakonjsek highlighted Transport Community's work in the Western Balkans to reduce greenhouse emissions. Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans will contribute to making the region more climate neutral.



The 9<sup>th</sup> technical committee on railways was organised on 6 May. It was an opportunity to take stock of implementation of TCT's Rail Action Plan, progress on TEN-T railway network, the project to improve security of level crossings in the region, as well as events to mark the European Year of Rail. Productive technical committee meetings focused on transport facilitation (10 May) and road safety (17 May) were also organised in May.

## June 2021



On 7 June, Director Zakonjšek and Deputy Director Siljanoska met with the President of the Republic of North Macedonia, H.E. Stevo Pendarovski. On this occasion, regional cooperation and parallel work on infrastructure flagship projects and policy reforms were highlighted as essential elements for economic development of the Western Balkans. During the **visit to North Macedonia**, Transport Community delegation met the Minister of Transport and Communications, Blagoj Bochvarski, discussing the implementation of the key flagship projects from the European

Commission's Economic and Investment plan for the Western Balkans on road and rail (Corridors X and VIII) as well as undertaken activities related to road safety. Reduction of road fatalities and working towards Vision Zero, and management of border crossings were the main topics discussed with the Director of the Public Security Bureau, Saso Tasevski. Finally, Green Lanes and their extension from Western Balkans to EU Member States were the focus of the meeting with the Director of Customs, Goran Sugareski and for the site visit to the border crossing Bogorodica/Evzoni. A **visit to Greece ensued**. Director Zakonjšek met in Athens with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, Kostas Karamanlis and Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, Yiannis Kefaloyiannis. The focus of the discussion was improvement of rail and multimodal transport in the region with an aim to increase trade exchange with Greece as one of region's main trade partners. A fruitful discussion was also led with the Secretary General for International Economic Affairs, Yannis Smyrlis, on the regional connectivity. After Greece, another visit to a regional partner – Kosovo\*. With Director of RailTran Mr Aslani discussion was focused on how to improve conditions on regional rail market and improve infrastructure maintenance. Minister of Finance, Labour and Transfers Hekun Murati met with Director Zakonjšek on 14 June for discussions on how to increase capacity and decrease waiting times at borders. Working towards integrated rail border crossing with North Macedonia was highlighted as priority, as well as modernisation of rail network. As part of visits to railway operators in Western Balkans, on 15 June Transport Community delegation met with representatives of network operator InfraKOS. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss rail infrastructure projects and safety improvements of level crossings.





On 15 June, Director Zakonjšek visited **Brčko, Gradiška** and **Svilaj bridge** in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), together with Ministers Butković (Croatia) and Mitrović (BIH). It was highlighted that the construction of Gradiška bridge is progressing



well and that this important cross-border investment would benefit from an integrated border crossing. Passengers and freight carrying capacity significantly improved, along with reduced travel time, which is a positive sign. Transport Community Permanent Secretariat continues to support the two parties to conclude an agreement on the type and category of border crossing point and stands ready to assist them in any way if needed. Director Zakonjšek and the **EU's Transport Commissioner**, Adina Vălean had a productive meeting in preparation for Transport Community Ministerial Council planned to be held in July in Slovenia. During the

encounter, it was underlined that Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for Western Balkans, prepared by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat is an important step for greener and more digital transport in the region of Western Balkans. Director Zakonjšek also met with the **Director-General of DG MOVE Henrik Hololei** to present Transport Community's current work and priorities for the upcoming period. During the discussion, it was agreed that regional cooperation in the Western Balkans is the most important pre-condition for economic development. On 11 June, leaders



of Western Balkans Six and representatives of regional organisations Transport Community, RCC and CEFTA participated in the **Western Balkans Summit** hosted by the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama. On the sidelines of the **Tirana Summit**, the heads of government of Albania and North Macedonia signed the Agreement on the Establishing of Joint Border and Customs Controls. **Transport Community's Rail Summer School 2021** began on 29 June. Professionals from governmental institutions (ministries, authorities and agencies), private

sector, think tank and NGOs gathered in Belgrade for four days of lively discussions aimed at building the capacities of our regional partners. Transport Community organised this event together with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and with the support of the City of Belgrade. Transport Community's commitment to improve road safety was reaffirmed on 3 June (World Bicycle Day) and June 10, (International Level Crossing Awareness Day). On the occasion of latter, Transport Community and partners produced a series of flyers in all languages of our regional partners with safety tips for drivers and passengers. Finally, in the month of June we continued to maintain close contact with the EU Delegations in the region. At the meeting with Heads of Missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Director Zakonjšek highlighted significance of investments in Corridor V, a major project in the country, for which the EU has provided over €200 million in grants.



## July 2021



On 5 July, Transport Community Permanent Secretariat organised the **4th Ministerial Council** in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia. The meeting, held under the auspices of the Slovenian Presidency of the European Union, gathered ministers of six Western Balkans partners, representatives of the European Commission and the EU Member States. Croatian Minister of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure Mr Oleg Butkovic also attended the meeting, highlighting Croatia's essential role in the process of connecting the region with the EU. The main point on the agenda was the **endorsement of the Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility for the Western Balkans** and strengthening of cooperation on **cross border connectivity in the region and with the EU**. Transport Community's **Action Plan for Waterborne Transport and Multimodality** was also endorsed at the meeting. The Action Plan promotes multimodal transport solutions and modal a shift, through targeted policies, including investments in inland waterways and maritime ports. Participants also reviewed **progress on extension of Green Lanes** to the borders between the EU and the Western Balkans and highlight dedication to making roads in the region safer together with international partners. In a video address, Mr Jean Todt, the United Nations Special Envoy for Road Safety, supported the **inauguration of the first phase of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory (WBRSO)**. As a concrete step to strengthen regional cooperation, ministers responsible for transport in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro signed an agreement on construction of bridge on River Tara including the connecting border sections, which will connect the Western Balkans region even better.



On 6 July, Slovenian Presidency of the European Union hosted a **ministerial meeting dedicated to cross-border connectivity between the EU and the Western Balkans**. The meeting, chaired by the Slovenian Minister of Infrastructure Jernej Vrtovec, focused on improving mobility and logistics in the Western Balkans, which will have a positive impact on the region's economic development. Transport Community presented its report on implementation

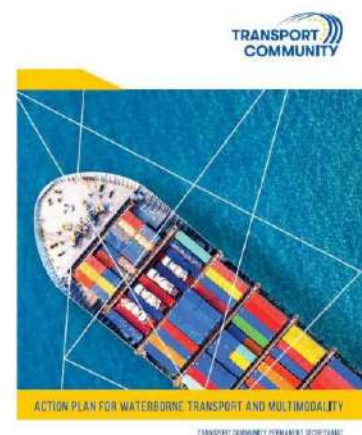




of the Green Lanes initiative, which was supported by ministers in attendance, including the Greek Minister of Infrastructure and Transport Mr Kostas Karamanlis.

Only three days after the inauguration of the road safety observatory, Transport Community held the first meeting with the partners during which road safety reports for WB6 were presented. WBRSO as a regional platform for information exchange and strategies (<https://www.transport-community.org/wbrso/>) will support Vision Zero – no more dead and seriously injured on the roads and railway crossings in the region. In addition to road safety, Transport Community efforts on establishing Green Lanes, were highlighted in **the conclusions of the Berlin Summit**. In addition to recognising the constructive role of partner organisations RCC and CEFTA, summit conclusions call for alignment of border agencies' working hours and recognise the constructive role of Greece, which had expressed readiness to extend the Green Lanes initiative from its borders to the Western Balkans.

Following the endorsement at the Ministerial Council of the Waterborne and Multimodality Action Plan, activities were initiated to jumpstart its implementation. On 13 July, during a visit to Albania, Director Zakonjšek met with the Minister of Infrastructure and Energy Ms Belinda Balluku to discuss maritime safety and rail projects. A day later, Transport Community's initiatives were presented to the **International Maritime Organisation Secretary**



**General Mr Kitack Lim.** During the meeting the role of regional ports Bar and Durrës was highlighted, as essential nodes of transport network in Western Balkans. IOM Secretary General is invited to take part in the Transport Community initiative to mark the World Maritime Day on 30 September. On 2 July, Transport Community **Summer School dedicated to rail finished**. During five days, 25 young professionals from Western Balkans engaged in constructive debates on the future of rail in the region.

## August 2021

The month of August was dedicated to **preparations for the First Western Balkans Rail Summit**, which will take place in Belgrade on 13 September. The main deliverables of the summit will be the **Dedication to Rail** signed by ministers in charge of transport and the **Memorandum of Understanding** between railway infrastructure managers in the Western Balkans committing the region to strive towards a rail system which is interoperable, safe, environmentally sustainable, and interconnected within the region and with European Union (EU). In 2021, the European Year of Rail, the Transport Community will promote rail in the region and better rail connections between Regional Partners, as well as rail connections with EU neighbouring countries. On 26 August, during a productive meeting dedicated to railway Corridor VIII connecting North Macedonia with Bulgaria, the Transport Community and the European Investment Bank discussed what can be done so that this project is delivered according to agreed timelines.



On 27 August, Director of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat Mr Matej Zakonjšek met in Kosovo\* with the Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Mr Librun Aliu. The two interlocutors reviewed **progress on implementation of Transport**

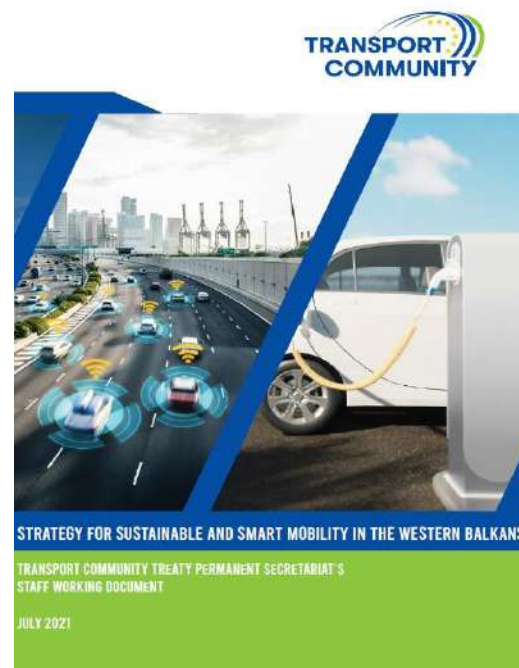


**Community's Action Plans and the Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility for the Western Balkans** and discussed strengthening of cooperation on **cross border connectivity in the region and with the EU**.

On 9 August, when the UN published its Climate Change Report (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>), the Transport Community highlighted the potential of transport to reverse the negative effects of climate change. Goals mentioned in the Transport Community's **Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans** can contribute to the goal of halting an increase of temperatures in the region.

The French Development Agency (AFD) for Western Balkans is financial supporting numerous projects that will benefit the region.

On 24 August, Transport Community Permanent Secretariat met with the AFD Director for Western Balkans Ms Dominique Hautbergue to discuss areas for possible cooperation and to present the TCT Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility.



\*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.



## September 2021



On 13 September, the **Western Balkans Rail Summit** in Belgrade gathered the entire Western Balkans region – Ministers in charge of transport of Southeast European Parties of the Transport Community Treaty, international financing institutions, European institutions, rail infrastructure managers, directors of rail companies and many other rail professionals. For the first time, under the auspices of Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure of Serbia, and organised together with the Transport Community, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Infrastructure and Development, all rail stakeholders of the Western Balkans got together with a united message: the time has come to **invest in rail and to**

**develop a strong and competitive rail transport industry, with open and competitive rail transport market, to improve the interoperability and safety of rail networks and to develop rail transport infrastructure in the Western Balkans.**

Transport leaders of the region committed to a number of priorities such as to rebuild direct intercity train links connecting the region and the EU, to enhance digitalisation of the railway systems and to exchange data for cross border passenger and freight transport. Building a modern, digitalised rail network, with direct express train connections between major cities will help **establish better connectivity and provide safer and environmentally sustainable mode of transport** for people and businesses in the Western Balkans.

This was recognised as key priority of the Dedication to Rail20 signed by six ministers in charge of transport in the region. Furthermore, railway infrastructure managers from the region signed a Memorandum of Understanding<sup>21</sup> that will pave the way for the implementation of intelligent transport systems for rail and for the development and maintenance of the rail TEN-T network infrastructure. The summit was organised to coincide with the arrival of Connecting Europe Express train. As part of the European Year of Rail, the train was welcomed with trumpets and traditional dance in Belgrade on 12 September and continued to Skopje the next day. On 13 September, before opening the summit, the Prime Minister of Serbia HE Ana Brnabić delivered opening remarks at the Central Railway Station in Belgrade demonstrating **highest level of political support to “put the rail back on track” in the Western Balkans**. The train then made its way through Western Balkans with an evening stop in North Macedonia. Transport Community is dedicated to working with our regional partners, EU and IFI’s on **modernisation of rail Corridor X** with the aim to have a reliable and fast connection Belgrade-Skopje-Thessaloniki.



Director Zakonjšek’s visit to Slovenia on 24 September was an opportunity to welcome the Connecting Europe Express train in Ljubljana and present priorities in the rail sector at the South East Europe Strategic Alliance for Rail Innovation high level conference in Ljubljana.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Dedication-to-Rail-09092021.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MoU-of-Infrastructure-Managers-WB6-10092021.pdf>

In the days before and after the summit, Transport Community held a series of constructive meetings focused on rail. On 12 September, meeting was held with the Vice President of the European Investment Bank Lilyana Pavlova to highlight the two institutions' dedication to **investments in rail in the Western Balkans, which are making the region greener and better connected**. A day after the summit, a meeting at the Transport Community Headquarters with the European Railway Agency Director Josef Doppelbauer focused on joint **work on technical assistance and capacity building for rail sector** in the region.

During a **visit to North Macedonia** on 6 September, Transport Community delegation met with Minister of Transport and Communications Blagoj Bochvarski for discussions on rail transport, with focus on Corridor VIII linking Skopje and Sofia, important developments in the area of road safety, as well as ongoing road infrastructure projects. On the same day, during a meeting with the Director of Macedonian rail infrastructure company Mr Hari Lokvenec, Director Zakonjšek stressed that North Macedonia will be able to use its geostrategic position when the railways linking Corridors X and VIII become fully operational and start being used by passengers and freight. A day before in Skopje, Transport Community's work was presented to future leaders of the region, participants of the School of Politics within the Presidential Center for Political Education. Key theme of the stimulating discussion was, how to utilise connectivity as basis for regional cooperation and EU integration. A positive development in this regard, happened on 16 September during a joint government session between North Macedonia and Kosovo\* when the authorities signed the **Customs agreement on railway transport**. The agreement will pave the way for establishment of joint controls at border crossing Hani i Elezit and strengthen ties between people.



Connectivity's importance was also noted in State of the Union remarks of the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen who announced the EU's new connectivity strategy, while also stating that *"investment in the future of the Western Balkans is the investment in the future of the EU"*, fully in line with priorities of the Transport Community.

On 1 September, Director Zakonjšek spoke at the 16th Bled Strategic Forum (BSF), in a session titled Building connectivity in CEE – the Case of the Three Seas Initiative. The main topics of the BSF included post – pandemic

recovery, green and digital transformation, and the future of EU enlargement process – all areas in which transport plays a crucial role.

Transport Community took active part in the **European Mobility Week** events in Belgrade and on 19 September, together with the Mayor of Belgrade and the EU Delegation highlighted the importance of sustainable mobility, while paying special attention to healthy lifestyles. Sustainable mobility was again in focus on 21 September at a workshop during which Transport Community presented its Sustainable and Smart Mobility for the Western Balkans.



To mark the **World Maritime Day** and highlight the role of Western Balkans ports, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania and the Port of Durres organised on 30 September a **conference “Towards a resilient, competitive and sustainable maritime sector in the Western Balkans”**. On this occasion, Transport Community highlighted its **active engagement in defining actions for sustainable maritime transport in the region**. The first important milestone on this path was the development of the **Action Plan for Waterborne Transport and Multimodality**, with numerous other initiatives planned in the upcoming period. The event gathered for the first time the



entire maritime sector of Transport Community to highlight enormous potential of connecting ports Durres and Bar to their hinterlands. Potential of hinterlands was discussed at a roundtable organised by the Montenegrin Ministry of Capital Investments in Bar on 28 September to which Transport Community also offered its insights. During the visit to Bar, Transport Community met with the management of Montenegro’s Maritime Safety Department.

Deputy Director Ljupka Siljanoska participated in the 8th Western Balkans Civil Society Forum in Skopje on 30

September presenting the views on **contribution of the civil society and importance of social dialogue for the sustainable transport development in Western Balkans**.

To mark a successful end of a busy month, Svilaj bridge, connecting Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatia, has been completed and officially opened on 30 September. This EU-funded infrastructure project can now start serving citizens by reducing travel time and strengthening connectivity between the region and the EU.



Using reliable data to improve road safety in the Western Balkans was the reason behind creation of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory (WBRSO). Director Zakonjšek presented work of the WBRSO at the International Road Assessment Programme 2021 workshop on 7 October. Road safety was in focus again at the online meeting on 20 October with the stakeholders from Bosnia and Herzegovina. On this occasion, TCT highlighted importance of roadside checks and technical inspections to remove faulty drivers and vehicles from the traffic and make our streets safer.



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awareness raising campaign to increase safety of level crossings in the region. A concrete step forward in the process of extension of Green Lanes came when a rail crossing point Presevo – Tabanovce was added to the Green Lanes network. Thanks to coordinating work of our colleagues at CEFTA, the rail border crossing point between North Macedonia and Serbia can now benefit from faster processing and more targeted checks, as a result of data exchange among regional partners.



Gradiška bridge, a symbol of connectivity between Western Balkans and the EU, was joined together on 19 October, two years after the start of construction. The bridge, which is a vital transport link between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the wider European network, will boost economic growth and bring people closer together. Joining of the bridge happened less than a month after the opening of bridge and border crossing Svilaj, an essential link on Corridor Vc.

Another positive development for connectivity with the EU, was the signing of memorandum on plans to complete the missing rail links that will connect Adriatic and Black Seas. On 19

October, Ministers in charge of transport from Albania, Bulgaria and North Macedonia signed the memorandum on sustainable development of Rail Corridor VIII reaffirming commitment for coordinated planning which is essential for this rail link to start serving citizens.

During a meeting in Sofia with the Bulgarian Minister of Transport Hristo Aleksiev and at the Bulgarian Customs Agency on 28 October, Director Zakonjšek reiterated the importance of Rail Corridor VIII. Reducing waiting times at Bulgaria's borders with Western Balkans, will improve links between WB and the EU. Participants agreed on the constructive role TCT and CEFTA Secretariats in the process of extending Green Lanes from the Western Balkans to Bulgaria. TCT's essential role in guiding the region towards the EU standards in transport was acknowledged on 19 October when the European Commission published its yearly Western Balkans Enlargement Package. Reports on all regional partners include recommendations in line with the TCT Action Plans.



In October, five TCT technical committees were held. Technical committee on railway was organised on 5 October in hybrid form in Belgrade and online. The meeting was an opportunity to evaluate numerous initiatives organised during the EU Year of Rail, watch a presentation about the automation of rail transport and learn about the case-study on Belgrade-Budapest high speed line. Technical committee on road safety met a day later to review progress on implementation of



coordination and capacity building efforts in this important area which requires additional attention in the Western Balkans.



representatives of the European Commission's DG NEAR and the Western Balkans Ambassadors to the EU. During a meeting with WBIF representatives, TCT delegation noted that smart, sustainable, and green elements should become part of investments on all modes of transport and this should be one of the requirements in WBIF applications.

Road Safety Action Plan and highlight the importance of reliable data and the role of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory. Reducing waiting times at borders and taking stock of recent accomplishments (joint rail and road crossings in the region) were main topics of the technical committee on transport facilitation whose members met on 7 October. A day later, members of the technical committee on roads began preparations for the 2022 TCT Year of Roads, which will be dedicated to green, safe and reliable roads of the future. Finally, technical committee on transport of dangerous goods (TDG) met on 27 October to welcome TCT Guidelines on TDG and commend the regional partners on



TCT Delegation's end-of-month visit to Brussels was an opportunity to discuss our work and coordinate future actions with the



## November 2021

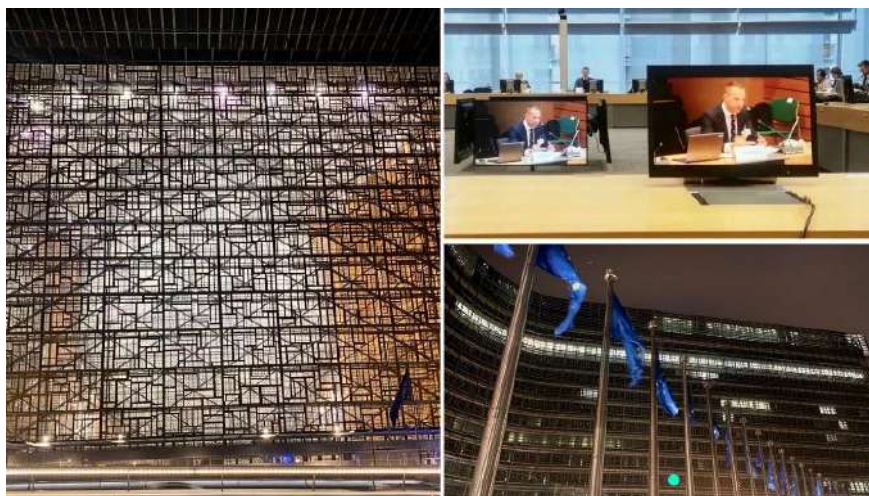


Joint meeting was organised in Dimitrovgrad on Serbian border with Bulgaria on 29 November, between the Transport Community delegation, Ministers Tomislav Momirović and Hristo Aleksiev, to discuss **strengthening of cooperation between Serbia and Bulgaria**. All parties agreed that **re-establishment of one-stop rail border crossing** in Dimitrovgrad will reduce waiting time, spur economic activity and bring concrete benefits to our citizens. Transport Community will continue supporting simplified border crossings

procedures and an operational Corridor X-c in **compliance with TEN-T standards**. Finalising construction of missing road sections on both sides of the border and fully utilising the rail Corridor X-c are among the priorities of our organisation. Rail was also in focus of the meeting with Deputy Heads of missions in Belgrade. Director Zakonjšek presented TCT work in this area, highlighting the importance of rail Corridor X and regional rail interoperability.

**Joint border management**, as a precondition for improved connectivity within Western Balkans and with EU Member States, was the topic at the 12 November meeting in Podgorica, attended by representatives of regional partners (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia) and the EU neighbor, Croatia. **Green Lanes and transport facilitation** in general were highlighted as preconditions for increased trade at the roundtable “Working together to build networks of change” at the Thesaloniki Summit on 4 November in which Transport Community took part.

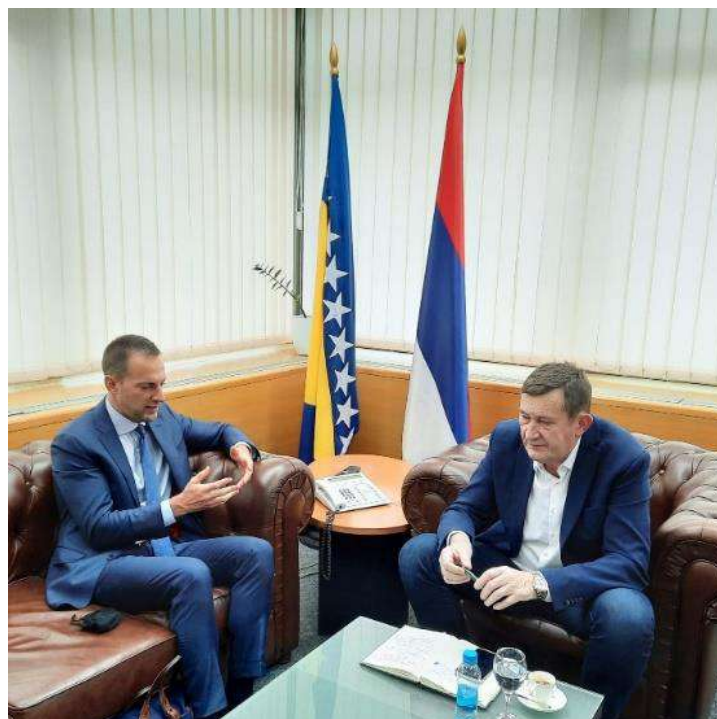
Upon invitation from Slovenian presidency of the Council of EU, Transport Community participated at the Working Party on Transport - Intermodal Questions and Networks on 22 November. In his address at the working party, Director Zakonjšek presented the **Transport Community’s main achievements in the year 2021** and the plans for the forthcoming 2022, highlighting the focus of activities on *Roads for the future*. During the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), Transport Community highlighted its work in the field of **green transformation of the region**. The Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans<sup>22</sup> includes clear objectives aimed at



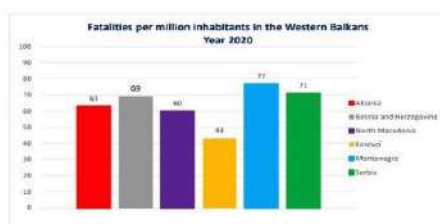
<sup>22</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Strategy-for-Sustainable-and-Smart-Mobility-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

reducing CO2 emissions, especially from roads, which account for 90% of all transport CO2 emissions in the region. The strategy proposes solutions how to decarbonise road transport and increase share of zero-emission vehicles.

Rail and inland waterways were in focus of the 16 November meeting with Minister Vojin Mitrović. Interlocutors noted the importance of adoption of a Railway Law that will serve as basis for development of rail in Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Improving navigability of River Sava and development of inland waterway ports** will benefit the environment and help move cargo away from roads. On the same day, TCT delegation met with the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Sarajevo Mr Stefano Ellero to discuss support to Bosnia and Herzegovina for the **development of sustainable and green transport**, with focus on rail.



Demining of River Sava as one of the most important waterways in the region will increase its navigability and improve multimodal transport between Western Balkans and the EU. Representatives of the Sava River Basin Commission and TCT held a productive meeting on this topic on 17 November. Multimodality was in focus again on 30 November when Transport Community organised the first technical committee on waterborne transport and multimodality. Participants analysed progress made since adoption of TCT Action Plan and the **role of waterborne transport in “greening” of the region**.



\* This is a report to the United Nations on the basis of data received from the countries of the region.

On 21 November, the **World Day of Remembrance** for road traffic victims, TCT Secretariat through video message<sup>23</sup> reiterated the call for action to save lives. **Road safety** as one of TCT priorities was highlighted again on 30 November at the global meeting of regional road safety observatories, in which the TCT Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory was part of.

Transport Community initiated online kick-off discussion on “*Women in Transport: Western Balkans Perspective*” on 19 November. The meeting brought together a group of key stakeholders to debate **gender balance in the transport sector** in the region and agree on the way forward. This was a first preparatory discussion on the gender balance in transport, that will be followed-up by the first Women in Transport Conference on the 8 March 2022 with a wider group of stakeholders.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/2021/11/21/video-message-world-day-of-remembrance/>



## December 2021

On 1 December 2021, meeting was held between Minister Belinda Balluku and Director Zakonjšek to review progress on the European Commission's Economic and investment plan and the **connectivity flagship project of rehabilitation of Tirana - Durrës rail**, with a new rail line connection to Tirana airport. This project is part of Corridor VIII, which is linking Adriatic and Black Seas. Follow up meeting with Tirana Mayor Erion Veliaj was a good opportunity to discuss **road safety in urban areas with specific focus on safe cycling and walking**. Transport Community will support Tirana as the European Youth Capital and the efforts to connect the city and its youth with European values.



On 2 December, Transport Community delegation participated in the official ceremony for the start of **construction of the first section of Peace Highway** (section Niš-Pločnik). The project, which is part of the European Commission's Economic and Investment Plan



for the Western Balkans, will improve connectivity, bring people closer and bolster regional cooperation. The highway is part of the TEN-T network and it has great importance for freight and passenger transport in the Western Balkans as it is the region's shortest route to the Port of Durrës on the Adriatic.

The **conference "Role of the Traffic Safety Agency and Importance of Reliable Data in Policy Making"**, jointly organised by the Transport Community, Macedonian Ministry of Transport and Communications and the World Bank, took place in Skopje on 6-7 December. Participants highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to **road safety** and called for improvements in the design of roads and vehicles, better laws and law enforcement and provision of timely, life-saving emergency care for injured. Transport Community's partners – the World Health Organisation and the UN regional commissions – developed a Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, which will be a guide for devising concrete actions that will improve road safety in the region.

The conference coincided with the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the **Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory**, operating within the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat, which focuses on **improving the reliability of road safety statistics in the region**.



More than 100 participants from all six regional partners of the Transport Community took part in the **TAIEX Regional Workshop on transport of dangerous goods**. The aim of the workshop was to provide expertise and guidance on

legislation regarding transport of dangerous goods and its implementation. Experts from Germany and Poland shared their best practice and experience on the requirements of the Directive 2008/68/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 2008 on the inland transport of dangerous goods.

On 9 December, together with the Polish Road Transport Inspection and the Embassy of Poland, the Transport Community organised **roadside check** at the tolling station Vrčin, close to Belgrade. The check was set up as part of the three-day training in road transport-related topics for road transport professionals from the regional participants of the Transport Community – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. Participants from the ministries in charge of transport, interior, road transport inspections, police, road authorities and road transport departments learned about the European Union transport policies and regulations. Inspections such as this allow identification and removing from traffic of the vehicles that are malfunctioning, and penalise drivers and operators, who do not possess the appropriate qualifications and documents. As such, they are an essential element of road safety. In addition to practical demonstration, the Polish inspection team provided invaluable **training on EU legislation** to workshop participants.



Speaking at a panel hosted by the Ministry of Economy of North Macedonia and held under the auspices of CEFTA on 15 December in Skopje, Director Zakonjšek highlighted the importance of **efficiency of border-crossing points for connectivity in the Western Balkans**. Transport Community values the shift of paradigm which strives for more efficient transport and logistics, rather than focusing solely on transport infrastructure. This approach is in line with the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans, Economic and Investment Plan, Common Regional Market Plan, and the TCT Transport facilitation Action Plan.

The **14th Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting** of the Transport Community was held on 16 December 2021 in Belgrade. Regional Steering Committee members endorsed the work plan and adopted the 2022 budget of the Secretariat. It was announced at the meeting that the next Ministerial Council will take place in Pristina on 10 March 2022. Participants also received information on Transport Community Permanent Secretariat's Guidelines for transportation of dangerous goods.