



MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION ON RAILWAY EXCELLENCE

“Investment in people is an investment for the future”



FEBRUARY 21, 2023
WESTERN BALKANS RAIL EXCELLENCE SUMMIT
PRISTINA 2023

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Western Balkans Rail Excellence Summit, Pristina 2023

The Memorandum of Cooperation is signed by the following railway stakeholders in the Western Balkans:

“Albrail”

“Hekurudha Shqiptare”

“Polytechnic University of Tirana,
Faculty of Mechanical Engineering”

“Railway Technical Centre – Sarajevo”

“University of Sarajevo, Faculty of
Transport and Communication”

“Željeznice Federacije BiH”

“Željeznice Republike Srpske”

“INFRAKOS SH.A”,

“Rail Trans L.L.C.”

“TRAINKOS SH.A”

“University of Pristina, Faculty of
Mechanical Engineering”

“JP ZRSM Infrastruktura”

“St. Clement of Ohrid University Bitola,
Faculty of Technical Sciences”

“SUGS Vlado Tasevski – Skopje”

“ZRSM Transport”

“MonteCargo JSC”

“University of Montenegro, Faculty of
Civil Engineering”

“ŽI Crne Gore AD”

“ŽP Crne Gore AD”

“Academy of Technical and Artistic
Vocational Studies, Belgrade”

“Infrastruktura Železnice Srbije A.D.”

“Srbija Cargo A.D.”

“Srbija Voz A.D.”

“University of Belgrade, Faculty of
Traffic and Transport Engineering”

“University of Nis, Faculty of Mechanical
Engineering”

“University of Novi Sad, Faculty of
Technical Sciences”

“University of Zagreb, Faculty of
Transport and Traffic Sciences”

(Hereinafter referred to as “the Parties”, or individually “the Party”).

PREAMBLE

- As defined in the Joint declaration endorsed at the Ministerial Council meeting of the Transport Community held on 10 December 2018, the South East European Parties committed to develop and implement the Regional Rail Strategy in the Western Balkans¹ in the framework of the Transport Community. The Joint declaration underlined the need for actions at regional level for the implementation of intelligent transport systems for rail and for the development and maintenance of the rail TEN-T network infrastructure.
- Taking into consideration the Transport Community Treaty (Council Decision (EU) 2019/392) signed by all partners on 9th of October 2017.
- Considering the 6th Ministerial Council held on 15 November 2022 where the Joint Statement calling for the more systematic involvement of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia as observing participants in the relevant Transport Community bodies was endorsed.
- Taking into account the regional Rail Action Plan for developing the regional rail strategy, adopted by Transport Ministers in October 2020 at the Transport Community Ministerial Council.
- Taking into consideration the European Commission Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans published in October 2020.
- Considering the importance of improving competitiveness and harmonisation of rail systems in South East Europe through the elimination of technical barriers and fostering of rail interoperability.
- Commitment taken under the Transport Community Treaty, as defined in Protocol VI of the Treaty.
- Taking into account Conclusions (May 2022, Ohrid) of the 2nd Rail Infrastructure Managers Network meeting for the Western Balkan, point 6 related to the lack of human resources.
- Having in mind the outcomes of the EU founded project: Skill Training Alliance for the Future European Rail system (STAFFER).
- Considering that all Parties expressed preparedness and willingness to foster enhanced bilateral contacts to support their work, by allowing them to share information and best practice, thus promoting skills and competencies.

¹ <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Declaration-Rail-Strategy-Western-Balkans.pdf>

THE PARTIES HAVE AGREED ON THE FOLLOWING:

Article 1.

Objectives

The main objective of this Memorandum is to define the necessary steps towards a Regional Railway Centre of Excellence (hereinafter referred to as the “Centre”) for regular training, consultation, coordination and experience sharing of all railway related activities at the regional level.

The Centre is expected to serve as a hub of expertise supporting the Parties individual and collective efforts to enhance their railway operational, project handling and management capabilities based on the best European practices. It is intended that the Centre will offer this collective expertise and experience for the benefit of all Parties.

In carrying out its work, the Centre intends to follow a comprehensive, multinational, multidisciplinary and academic-based approach.

Its goal is to contribute to the sustainable development of the rail system in the region, in a coordinated manner at regional level.

This Memorandum is first step towards a regional Centre on railway related issues to ensure a fully operational regional railway system.

Article 2.

Future possible mandate and scope of action of the Centre

The Centre shall cooperate closely with the Transport Community Technical Committee on Railways in respect of the objectives of the Transport Community. To this end, the Centre will inform the Technical Committee on Railways about its activities and progress and will consider the recommendations of the Technical Committee on Railways.

The main priorities of the Centre are to:

- Provide services regarding capacity building, skills development, youth employment in the railway industry and relevant certifications, within the Transport Community,
- Research, draft and advocate in the field of railway transport and connectivity with relevance in the national and regional level and in the adoption of the EU acquis and standards in relation to railway safety and railway operations,
- Serve as a knowledge exchange framework to connect rail public bodies and private capabilities towards digital, automation and AI application to real-life railway and logistics problems,
- Exchange best practices on the above-mentioned topics.

The above-mentioned list of activities is non-exhaustive and may evolve in accordance with the needs of the sector.

Aim

The Centre aims to be a proactive platform of coordination for national and regional stakeholders in railway affairs. Its objectives are threefold:

- Provide education and training in railway operations and law, railway engineering, multimodal logistics and drive reform of relevant normative framework and governance as per the EU Acquis stipulated in the Annex 1 of the Transport Community Treaty regarding railway transport in South-East Europe,
- Mainstream and boost Transport Community railway development and connectivity objectives in the relevant EU-regional cooperation mechanism/instruments (policy-making).
- Support the railway authorities in South East Europe, to improve rail operations, enhance their regional footprint as railway services providers, strengthen their governance and security, identify innovative solutions to tackle climate change, support growth and increase resilience.

Main Activities

The objectives of Centre will be:

- Carry capacity building in railway connectivity and transport, and provide related trainings; become a centre of expertise in railway affairs and connectivity;
- Develop, adopt and update the respective Regulatory Framework (EU acquis as per Annex 1 of the Transport Community Treaty included) on railway affairs, connectivity and related fields in accordance with international best practice and protocols. A key instrument to achieve this will be to coordinate with the Transport Community Secretariat the establishment of a regional Railway Action Plan in the Western Balkans.
- The Railway Centre of Excellence will act as an advocate of railway transport in various mechanisms.

Article 3.

Membership

Main users of the services of the Centre shall be all relevant railway stakeholders from South East Europe and the Observing Participants of the Transport Community, such as:

- *Railway Companies,*
- *Railway Authorities,*
- *Educational Institutions on all levels,*
- *Railway Industry,*
- *Other relevant institutions/organisations/companies.*

The institutions from the European Union, the European Commission, relevant EU agencies and undertakings (e.g. European Union Agency for Railway, Europe`s Rail Joint Undertaking), International Organisations and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. Community of European Railways, European Infrastructure Managers) can participate as contributors to the Centre.

All parties willing to contribute to this Memorandum and become its signatories can simply sign it on any occasion.

Article 4.

Operation of the Centre

The operation of the Centre shall be described and elaborated within specially dedicated project for establishment of all structures and operations of the Centre.

Article 5.

Transport Community Permanent Secretariat will facilitate the establishment of the Railway Centre of Excellence.

Article 6.

Signed at Pristina on 21 February 2023 in English language and by the Participants:

“Albrail”

**“St. Clement of Ohrid University Bitola,
Faculty of Technical Sciences”**

“Hekurudha Shqiptare”

“SUGS Vlado Tasevski – Skopje”

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