



In February 2023, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat, supported by the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure and H.E. Liburn Aliu, organised **three back-to-back events dedicated to building a user-friendly, efficient and sustainable rail system** in the Western Balkans. The **Rail Excellence Summit** on 21 February 2023 highlighted the need to create job opportunities and attract young people to railway companies and administrations. By bringing rail experts, universities, and government representatives to discuss these issues, intention is to keep the talent in the region and spur innovation and technological development in the rail sector. The next step is establishment of a Regional Centre of Rail Excellence with universities, rail companies and administrations. This initiative was set in motion by the **signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation** by

the educational institutions and the railway companies from South East Europe. The centre should identify and execute knowledge transfer in order to improve the quality of the rail systems with the ultimate goal of speeding up development of rail transport systems in South East Europe in line with state-of-the-art EU rail systems. The **Rail Technical Committee** on 22 February 2023 discussed how to eliminate barriers to interoperability and create a fully integrated rail system in the region. The main achievements of 2022 were summed up, followed by discussion on 2023 priorities. Harmonisation of the national rail legislation with EU Rail Acquis, implementation of railway infrastructure projects, access to the European Electronic Register of Vehicles (EEVR) and future trainings, were only some of the topics that participants discussed in Pristina and online. Finally, to contribute to regional rail experts' education, the Transport Community and the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) organised a **training dedicated to train driver licensing** on 23 February 2023 for 20 participants from the Western Balkans and 10 online participants.

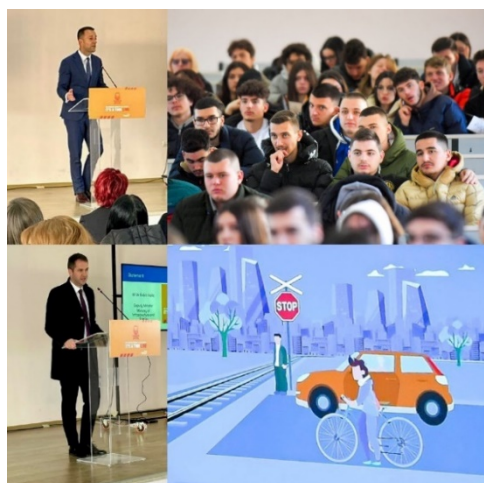
On 15 February 2023, **Minister of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina Edin Forto** hosted the Transport Community delegation in Sarajevo for an **introductory meeting**. Participants agreed to further strengthen cooperation in the areas of common interest.

Two days later in Skopje, the Transport Community delegation **met with the Minister of Transport and Communications Blagoj Bochvarski** to review progress on road and rail infrastructure projects on Corridor VIII and the planned reforms of road and rail safety laws to align them with the EU Acquis.



Integration of region's rail transport market into the EU was among the topics discussed during a **meeting with the Director of the European Agency for Railways (ERA) Joseph Doppelbauer** on 1 February. Other topics included - full involvement of TCT partners in the European Electronic Vehicle Registry and the trainings planned for 2023. Closer cooperation and plans for 2023 were discussed also with the intergovernmental forum **Central European Initiative (CEI)** during a **meeting** on 23 February.

On 21 February 2023, the Secretariat hosted an **informal trilateral meeting on transport facilitation** with representatives from relevant institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The meeting provided an excellent exchange of views on the road and rail border-crossing measures, and the regional efforts to implement the actions from the Transport Facilitation Action Plan, also from the perspective of the businesses represented by the Chambers of Commerce.



The final regional **event of the awareness-raising campaign “It’s a Thin Line”** was organised in Tirana on 8 February in the presence of Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Energy Endrit Molla at the vocational school “Harry Fultz”. Campaign [video](#) was shown to students and educational flyers were distributed. In his remarks Director Zakonjšek highlighted that during ongoing reconstruction of railway lines (sections Tirana – Durres , Tirana – Rinas Airport, Vore – Hani Hottit, Durres – Rrogozhine – Pogradec) almost all level crossings will be upgraded.

To enable electronic freight information exchange, reduce administrative burden for logistics operators and facilitate multimodal transport in the region, the Secretariat commissioned a [report on E-freight](#) in the Western Balkans. According to the report introduction of electronic freight transport information (eFTI) would result in savings of up to 163,5 mil EUR and up to 81.000 trees in only 5 years.

During a **conference in Sofia dedicated to connectivity** and organised by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Director Zakonjšek presented Transport Community activities with focus on the future WB Transport Corridor and the developments on Corridor VIII connecting Italy, Albania, North Macedonia and Bulgaria. During a meeting with the newly appointed KAS Director for Montenegro and Serbia Jakov Devcic, the Secretariat presented its 2023 focus on cross-border connectivity and possibilities to build upon already good cooperation with KAS. In February, the Secretariat continued working on a **more systematic involvement of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia in the work of the Transport Community**. In addition to meetings with senior transport officials of Moldova and Georgia, meeting on technical level were held with representatives of three observing participants of the Transport Community.