

Efficient transportation of people and goods ensures access to jobs and services and enables trade and economic growth in the economies. This was a key message delivered at the **Connectivity Summit**, organised by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Secretariat on 15-16 May, under the auspices of the Ministry of Capital Investments of Montenegro. Deputy Prime Minister Ervin Ibrahimović and Director General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations Mr Gert-Jan Koopman opened the Summit which gathered Transport Ministers, Customs Directors, International Financial Institutions, and other high-level representatives, experts, and stakeholders from the Western Balkans to discuss and agree on moving forward the issues related to sustainable and efficient trade, transport and logistics.

“Connectivity Summit focuses on investments in transport infrastructure and reforms of policies that will facilitate transition to more efficient mobility in the Western Balkans in line with the strategic documents of the Transport Community. Actions targeting the main road and rail border crossings on the indicative extension of the TEN-T Network in the Western Balkans, including with the neighbouring EU Member States, will address inefficiencies and delays at those points and modernise the operations.



The Transport Community is working with its partners to improve the interactions of different transport modes along the Network to enable smoother, more efficient, and less costly logistic chains,” Transport Community Permanent Secretariat Director Zakonjšek said.

The **high-level Understanding on Indicative TEN-T Maps in the Western Balkans** was agreed on 16 May by the EU and the Transport Community Treaty contracting parties. The establishment of the new Western Balkans–Eastern Mediterranean Corridor aims to strengthen the region’s economic, social, and territorial cohesion and create seamless transport systems across borders, without physical gaps, bottlenecks or missing links.



The Joint CEFTA-TCT Declaration “Taking Forward the Green Lanes”, committing to further facilitate transport and trade with the aim to reduce waiting times and improve the efficiency of the EU logistic and value chains, has also been endorsed. It will give further impetus to all relevant authorities to work on full extension of the Green Lanes and establishing one-stop and synchronised border controls.

A working lunch organised during the Connectivity Summit highlighted the **importance of the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes**. The extension of the Green Lanes to the Western Balkans region, as an Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, were both cited as good examples that addressed transport and trade blockages and highlighted the importance of long-term transport and trade facilitation measures, such as multimodal infrastructure, international transit agreements, digitalisation of procedures, and sharing pre-arrival information for the movement of goods. Given these developments, **the Western Balkans parties and Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova** share a common denominator when it comes to the development of their transport policy and network: **the need to work together with the European Commission on setting the same standards and quality of service along a truly interconnected TEN-T Network** that will link Europe with Central Asia, opening up the possibilities for new trade routes or strengthening the existing ones.



On 15 May, the TCT delegation joined Deputy Prime Minister Ervin Ibrahimović, the EU Delegation, and municipality representatives in a **visit to the final works at the joint rail border crossing in Bijelo Polje**. The EU-funded station will house authorities of Montenegro and Serbia under the same roof and speed up the procedures without the need for trains to stop at two borders. The new facilities will, once operational, become a symbol of good regional cooperation.

The Secretariat **marked 9 May (Europe Day)** by welcoming, for the first time, to our Belgrade HQ representatives of the **observing participant Georgia**. The goal of the visit was to gain new perspectives and share information regarding the state of play of legal approximation and network development in their countries. Together, we reviewed the proposed action plans, identified technical assistance needs and introduced the TCT strategic documents.



On 15 May, the Transport Community, in cooperation with Regional Partners from the Western Balkans, **launched an online platform** that would help us make better, more informed decisions that would save lives. The launch coincided with the start of the 7th UN Road Safety Week. The collection of timely and objective information that effectively contributes to reducing road traffic casualties is the primary goal of the Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory. The launch of the TCT road safety online [platform](#) marks the first time that yearly road safety indicators for the Western Balkans are accessible in one place. It offers dynamic and aggregated road safety information that is easily understandable and accessible to stakeholders. Users can receive tailored solutions to set and monitor regional road safety targets and contribute to improving and harmonising data.



At the start of the UN Road Safety Week, together with the Road Traffic Safety Agency of Serbia and the International Road Federation (IRF), we **co-organised a conference dedicated to achieving "Vision Zero" in the Western Balkans**, taking place in Belgrade. Meetings were organised with Mr Dmitry Mariyasyn, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE and with the Vice-President of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Mr Kris Peeters to discuss the future of

cross-sectoral cooperation, particularly in relation to improving transport safety in the region. By forging strong partnerships, we are finding new ways to address road safety issues and to save lives.

On 11 May, **Director Zakonjšek opened in Sarajevo the 12th Congress on Transport Infrastructure and Transport.** The event offered



an opportunity to look ahead to the bright future of railways in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Western Balkans. Zakonjšek highlighted the need to bring back passenger rail connectivity to the region. Together with the Mayor of Sarajevo, Ms Benjamina Karić, Zakonjšek spoke at the opening of the international conference "Sustainable Urban Mobility" held at Sarajevo City Hall. With investments in the green tramway network more than a century ago, Sarajevo set an example for the world. Today, the city continues to modernise its public transport and strives to become climate-neutral by 2030. On the next day TCT joined the **International Conference on Advances in Traffic and Communication Technologies** where we highlighted that the region needs to continue with the Green Revolution, meaning

modernisation of public transport and building climate-neutral cities by 2030.

On 19 May, in Tirana, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat took part in a **coordination meeting during Albanian Chairmanship of the Berlin Process.** Connectivity Agenda - improving transport and energy links in the region and with the EU Member States – featured prominently on the agenda.



At the **first meeting of the Network of Road Directors in the Western Balkans**, taking place on 23 May at the TCT HQ, productive discussions on road infrastructure development and collaboration took place. The directors shared progress, challenges, and priorities for the TEN-T Road Network in the region. Participants welcomed Georgia, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova as Observing Participants. Their presentations shed light on road infrastructure development and challenges.



On 17 May, we **welcomed #MadeOfUs vloggers** Jelena and Joshua to our HQ for engaging talks on connectivity in the Western Balkans, infrastructure projects and attractiveness of the transport sector for youth.

An **online workshop with the observing participant Republic of Moldova** took place on 25 May. Participants emphasised regional cooperation in transport, strengthened involvement in the TCT and implementation of action plans for road, rail, safety, & more, taking important steps towards EU standards & integration in transport.

On 26 May, Director Zakonjšek spoke at the conference organized by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Bruges on **"Connectivity Policy on the Balkans: Between Sustainability, EU-Integration and Geopolitical Challenges"** and shared views on sustainability of connectivity in the Western Balkans.



On 30 May, Director Zakonjšek opened the **4th Southeast European Mobility Fair** in Belgrade that brought together industry leaders, stakeholders, and distinguished guests to showcase the transformative future of railway infrastructure in the Western Balkans. Zakonjšek highlighted that, with projected investments of over EUR 10 billion, coupled with the EU support and commitment to sustainability, rail is a driving innovation and connectivity in the region.

