

21st Regional Steering Committee meeting

18 October 2023, Vienna

Draft Minutes and Conclusions

1. 21st Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting was held on 18 October 2023, in a hybrid form (physical participation and online).
2. All RSC members attended the meeting as well as members from the three Observing Participants, and observers of the European Union Member States.
3. The meeting was led by the Chair of the Regional Steering Committee, Ms Jasminka Kirkova and Co-Chair, Ms Mona Bjorklund. The Chair greeted all participants and announced the forthcoming Ministerial Council in Skopje in December 2023 hosted under the Chairmanship of the Republic of North Macedonia. The Co-Chair underlined the challenging circumstances under which the transport cooperation and integration remain priorities. The European Commission proposed, with the Presidency agreement, to add an A.O.B. point on the upcoming TCT review.
4. Agenda of the 21st RSC meeting was adopted with proposed agenda point under AOB: Transport Community Treaty review in 2024.

POLICY

5.	<p>Endorsement of the Action Plans and the EU Acquis Progress Report 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Community Permanent Secretariat (TCT Secretariat) presented the Third Progress Report on Action Plans and the EU Acquis Progress Report. The Reports show not only overall, but progress per each Regional Partner, as well as the key achievements per each mode of transport reached since the previous reporting period. As of 2024, the first generation of Action Plans will expire, and the new generation will be introduced by the TCT Secretariat. • The Chair thanked TCT Secretariat for the well-prepared document and reiterated that it represents a good basis for the next generation of Action Plans. Regional Partners who have not sent their comments to TCT Secretariat were invited to deliver it in the next five working days. • European Commission underlined that the acquis implementation is a critical part of the TCT cooperation and one of the main objectives of the Transport Community Treaty. European Commission expressed concern on slow progress in EU acquis implementation and invited all Regional Partners to intensify EU acquis implementation efforts. The European Commission encouraged the observing participants to cooperate with the TCT Secretariat to prepare a similar report for the Trio. It also invited the TCT Secretariat to propose concrete measures
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	<p>how to boost acquis implementation in the context of the upcoming new action plans for the period 2024-2027.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Albania underlined the main highlights and challenges per each mode of transport pertaining to Albania as presented in the Action Plan. • Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina thanked TCT Secretariat for its efforts in providing the Report and thanked European Commission for help in project demining of right bank of Sava river. • Representative of Montenegro reiterated that the Ministry is continually working on aligning acquis in railway, waterborne and road sector. • Representative of Kosovo* underlined that aligning the Annex I will remain priority in order to intensify progress in this area, and thanked TCT Secretariat and the European Commission for providing support. • Representative of Serbia underlined the importance between the transposition and implementation and thanked TCT Secretariat for the well-prepared report. <p>Conclusion: <i>TCT Secretariat invited all Regional Partners to send their comments to the Report within 5 working days, as of the meeting date, to the TCT Secretariat. This will be followed by a shortened written procedure for its formal endorsement.</i></p> <p><i>The first outline of the NextGen Action Plans will be presented by the TCT Secretariat in the first RSC meeting in 2024.</i></p>
6.	<p>Presentation of Main conclusions of the 2023 Report: Development of indicative TEN- T extensions of the Comprehensive and Core Network in Western Balkans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat highlighted the main conclusions of the 2023 TEN-T Annual Report. The draft of the document will be shared with all relevant stakeholders in due time, initiating formal endorsement procedure for the upcoming Regional Steering Committee meeting in December 2023. • Representative of Montenegro expressed dissatisfaction regarding WBIF’s support in several key road infrastructure projects, where implementation is delayed. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledges the main conclusions of the TEN-T compliance report.</i></p>

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

7.	<p>Final Report on the Progress of the Study “Assessment of the Rail Market in the Western Balkans in Terms of Capacities, Policies, Economic and Technical Level of Development of Freight and Passenger Transport Segments”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented key findings and recommendations of the Final Report on the progress of Study “Assessment of the Rail Market in the Western Balkans in Terms of Capacities, Policies, Economic and Technical Level of Development of Freight and Passenger Transport Segments”. • The Chair underlined that the maintenance needs in railway sector exceed the budget dedicated to it in each Regional Partner. • The European Commission acknowledged the presented information on the final report. It had previously shared some comments on behalf of one EU Member State. • Representative of Montenegro reported on the preparation of study for development of intermodality for Montenegro. • Representative of Albania suggested that the economy of rail sector within the region needs to be assessed. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the presentation of the final report on the Study “Assessment of the Rail Market in the Western Balkans in Terms of Capacities, Policies, Economic and Technical Level of Development of Freight and Passenger Transport Segments”. Moreover, the Regional Partners committed to initiate the activities related to the recommendations deriving from named study.</i></p>
8.	<p>Technical Assistance delivered under CONNECTA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented the background, scope of work, deliverables and next steps per each of the three projects delivered under CONNECTA assistance. • European Commission underlined the importance of technical assistance provided to Regional Partners, such as in the area of ITS strategy preparation. • Representative of Kosovo thanked TCT and European Commission for the support in preparation of ITS Strategy, which will soon be implemented. • Representative of Albania announced that the legal act is being drafted in the area of ITS and expressed interest to participate in ITS event in Skopje in December 2023. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the results of CONNECTA’s assistance for the deployment of sustainable and smart mobility solutions, the development of ITS strategies, and the modernisation of road border crossing points (BCPs). Regional Partners commit to incorporate the</i></p>

	<p><i>results into the policy and planning strategies, and to proceed with the implementation aiming to improve transport infrastructure and enhance connectivity in the Western Balkans.</i></p>
9.	<p>First proposal of TODIS Operational Framework (relevant stakeholders, users' roles and responsibilities, working procedures and access to TODIS data)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented proposal for further operating of TODIS, regulating issues such as responsibility regarding data update (who are the main stakeholders and their roles), access to TODIS data (who will be able to access the system and to what extent), the TODIS public portal (what data will the general public be able to access) and how TODIS data will be used. Once TCT Secretariat receives and incorporates input from the Regional Partners, the TODIS operational framework shall be endorsed at the upcoming RSC meeting scheduled for December 2023. • European Commission thanked TCT Secretariat for preparation of TODIS Operational Framework and underlined that it needs to ensure coherence and complementarity with EU TENtec system. Three crucial elements are reiterated: geographical alignment in line with TENtec parameter data, core TEN-T related technical parameters in line with TENtec, data exchange, meaning TODIS should use TENtec's API and to be adjusted to it. • TCT Secretariat confirmed availability of TODIS to export the data to the TENtec system. However, formal mandate will be needed to be given to TCT Secretariat in order to report data on TEN-T, as stipulated for the Member States. <p><i>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the proposed TODIS procedural framework and looked forward to commencing of the system's operational stage.</i></p>
10.	<p>State of Play and the way forward to joining Community Database on Accidents on the Roads in Europe (CARE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat informed that, after the successful assessment, the EU High-Level Group on Road Safety in its meeting held in June 2023, granted Serbia with observer status in CARE. Upon the successful submission process of Serbia in the EU CARE database, the exercise is now open for other regional participants of the Western Balkans. The criteria for joining CARE and the next steps were presented. • European Commission welcomed Serbia's inclusion to the CARE database and thanked TCT Secretariat for working on this in the previous period. The pilot offers a blueprint for other Regional Partners to follow Serbia's example and get an observer status in CARE database in the future.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Serbia offered help to other Regional Partners in this regard. <p><i>Conclusion: Regional Steering Committee members welcomed the positive outcome of the pilot project for the Joining CARE and congratulated Serbia for being accepted in CARE Expert Group.</i></p>
11.	<p>Presentation of Concept Note for “112” and eCall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented Concept Note for “112” emergency number and eCall. TCT Secretariat proposed organisation of high-level coordination meeting with all stakeholders concerned and involved in 112 and eCall in the first half of 2024 in order to agree on the way forwards. • European Commission mentioned that the 112 eCall legislation applies in the EU only to passenger cars and vans, and is not mandatory for Heavy Goods Vehicles. <p><i>Conclusion: Regional Steering Committee members welcomed the initiative related to implementation of 112 and eCall by the TCT Secretariat and organisation of dedicated meeting in the first half of 2024.</i></p>
12.	<p>Information on Cooperation with Observing Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat informed RSC on engaging three observing participants in its activities until September 2023 and assessed overall engagement as satisfactory. All observing participants expressed strong appreciation for the closer cooperation with the TCT and the already provided technical assistance. • European Commission underlined very good progress in cooperation with the Observing Participants and their closer involvement in TCT Secretariat’s work – it thanked the TCT Secretariat in this regard. Preparation of the action plans for the Observing Participants, their participation in the technical assistances, work, meetings of the TCT is very welcomed. European Commission repeated from its perspective, support for Observing Participants to become full members to the TCT in a second stage. • The European Commission invited the observing participants to share their experience so far from the closer association to the work of the Transport Community. • Representative of Moldova thanked TCT Secretariat, DG MOVE and DG NEAR for the assistance provided so far and underlined that the goal of Moldova is to accomplish full membership to TCT Secretariat as soon as possible. In order to perform this, adjustment of legal framework needs to continue together with infrastructure project implementation. In that regard, providing technical assistance and capacity building initiatives by the TCT Secretariat is very welcomed and already much appreciated.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Ukraine thanked TCT Secretariat and informed that Ukraine already started to work on preparation of the TEN-T compliance report. Ukraine completed self-screening of EU acquis implementation in Chapter 14 and TCT Secretariat’s support and technical assistance will be needed with regard to the actions identified as not completed. • Representative of Georgia thanked everyone for extending the possibility to Georgia to be Observing Participant to the TCT and emphasised several important events organised by the TCT Secretariat in the course of 2023 where they had an opportunity to participate. Full EU integration of Georgia remains its high political priority – the possibility for Georgia to join the TCT as full member will need to be further assessed. • Montenegro welcomed the prospects of the observing participants joining as full TCT members. It encouraged them to continue to participate and make full use of available opportunities. <p><i>Conclusion: Regional Steering Committee members welcomed the engagement by the Observing Participants and looked forward to continuing closer cooperation in the coming period.</i></p>
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ADMINISTRATION

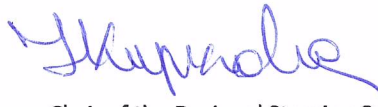
13.	<p>Final discussion on Budget 2024 and presentation of the Annual Work Program of TCT for 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented Draft Budget 2024 and Draft- Annual Work Program of the TCT for 2024. The proposed budget for the year 2024 amounts to 2% increase compared to the budget for 2023. Certain costs in the Budget 2024 will be reduced, such as costs of Ministerial Council and RSC meetings, based on unspent amounts in this budget line from 2022 and 2023. TCT Secretariat also reiterated key highlights, milestones and planned activities of the Annual Work Program for 2024. Theme of 2024 will be Sustainable and green mobility. • The Chair suggested that savings from the Ministerial Council and RSC budget organisation in 2024 are transferred to the workshops and technical assistance for the Regional Partners. • The European Commission welcomed the planned focus in the 2024 Annual Work Programme on sustainable and green mobility issues. • Representative of Kosovo offered to host the 2024 Summer School in Pristina. • Representative of Bosnia and Hercegovina called for more clear actions in relation to road permits digitalisation to be included in the Annual Work Plan for 2024.
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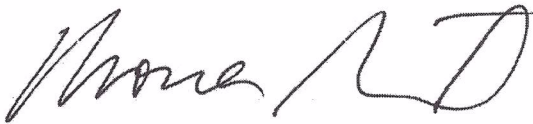
Conclusion: *The RSC welcomed presented Draft Budget 2024 and Draft- Annual Work Program of the TCT for 2024. The final document will be presented to the RSC in December for endorsement and adoption respectively.*

AOB

14.	<p>Secondments-State of Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCT Secretariat informed RSC that the secondment procedure will be re- initiated as of 2024, starting with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania shall be invited at the end of the secondment cycles order, after EU, to submit secondment candidates. This is due to inability of Albania as first invited, to submit secondee nominations. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the report on the Implementation of the Secondment Rules and is encouraging Bosnia and Herzegovina to put forward secondee nominations for period March 2024- September 2024 to the TCT Secretariat.</i></p>
15.	<p>Clean Bus and Clean Fleet platform for Western Balkans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCT Secretariat informed RSC about the Clean Bus Platform which is a part of the European Commission's Clean Bus Deployment Initiative, which aims to support the deployment of clean bus technologies across Europe. The objectives and pillars of the platform were briefly presented, as well as the next steps, including potential adoption of the platform during the Annual TCT Summit in 2024 by the Ministers in charge of Transport. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee expresses its support for the Clean Bus and Clean Fleet platform and invites the TCT Secretariat to continue with actions in this regards.</i></p>
16.	<p>Review of the Transport Community Treaty in 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission reminded that the TC Treaty review should be initiated in the course of 2024 and is inviting TCT Secretariat to develop a concept note for developing a report on the state of play of the Transport Community Treaty implementation. Such report/ analytical input should examine what has happened in the first five years of the TCT and what are the issues that could be the subject of a possible Treaty review. It would frame the informal stage of reflections leading up to the launch of the formal review process, should that be deemed necessary. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee invites TCT Secretariat to prepare a short proposal/concept note on how to ensure the analytical underpinning of the review process (including roadmap with timeline) and present it to RSC in the next meeting in December 2023.</i></p>




Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Jasminka Kirkova


Co - Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Mona Bjorklund