

22nd Regional Steering Committee meeting

11 December 2023, Skopje

Minutes and Conclusions

1. The 22nd Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting was convened on 11 December 2023, combining in-person attendance and virtual participation. The meeting saw attendance from all RSC members, representatives from the three Observing Participants and European Union Member States observers.
2. Presiding over the meeting were the Chair of the Regional Steering Committee, Ms Jasminka Kirkova (North Macedonia), and the Co-Chair, Ms Mona Bjorklund (European Commission). Ms Kirkova, in her opening remarks, warmly welcomed all attendees and expressed her gratification for hosting both the RSC meeting and the Ministerial Council in Skopje. She highlighted the event's significance under the Republic of North Macedonia Chairmanship. She presented a new RSC Member, Ms Elena Kochova, a representative of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of North Macedonia. Ms Mona Bjorklund welcomed participants and briefed RSC on the latest EU developments: Commission proposal for a New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, 2023 Enlargement Reports showing limited development across the Region of aligning with the EU transport acquis, and the upcoming EU-Western Balkans Summit and European Council meeting.
3. The agenda for the 22nd RSC meeting was unanimously approved as initially proposed.

POLICY

5.	<p>Presentation of the annual Report on the implementation of Dangerous Goods guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Community Permanent Secretariat (TCT Secretariat) presented the Second Annual progress report on the implementation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) guidelines. Overall progress in the reporting period has been slow to moderate. A brief outlook per each Regional Partner was given. Budgetary and human resources remain challenging within the region regarding the implementation of ADR. • The Chair reiterated that assistance from EU member states is much needed and welcomed in implementing dangerous goods legislation. • European Commission acknowledged the information presented by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat and invited the Regional Partners to continue efforts to implement TDG-related acquis .
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	<p><i>Conclusion: The RSC acknowledged the 2023 Annual Report on the Implementation of Dangerous Goods Guidelines and proposed a consistent follow-up of the recommendations therein.</i></p>
6.	<p>Progress report on the implementation of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in the Western Balkans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented the Second progress report on the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in the Western Balkans. The key findings, challenges, and progress per each Regional Partner were outlined. • The Chair underlined that a lot of work is ahead of Western Balkans. EC's Growth Plan, as introduced recently, including the Safe and Sustainable Transport Programme, will bring significant funding opportunities for the region. <p>The European Commission acknowledged the presented information and thanked the TCT Secretariat for its efforts to promote safe, sustainable and resilient mobility in the Western Balkans. The Commission invited the Regional Partners to intensify efforts to implement the Strategy, in line with latest developments at EU level, as reflected in Annex I TCT. The Commission also answered some questions about the roll-out of the Safe and Sustainable Transport Programme.</p> <p><i>Conclusion: The RSC acknowledged the 2023 Progress Report on the Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans.</i></p>
7.	<p>Endorsement of the Development of Indicative TEN-T Extensions of the Comprehensive and Core Network in Western Balkans Report 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented the third Annual Report on the Development of Indicative TEN-T Extensions of the Comprehensive and Core Network in Western Balkans. For the first time, the Report used data from the TODIS database. The latest developments on the TEN-T network and infrastructure conditions per each mode of transport were briefly presented. Compliance rates remain uneven between the transport modes, and maintenance and funding for this purpose are the key challenges for the region. The Report will be presented at tomorrow's Ministerial Council. • The Chair underlined that many investments are needed in the rail sector to shift from road to rail. Maintenance is one of the key recommendations for each Regional Partner, and appropriate funding is needed in this regard. • The European Commission thanked for the prepared Report, highlighted that further advancement is needed in rail, and underlined that TODIS fully serves its purpose.

	<p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee endorsed the 2023 Report on Development of Indicative TEN-T Extensions of the Comprehensive and Core Network in Western Balkans.</i></p>
8.	<p>Approval of the draft concept for the Transport Community Green Mobility Summit in 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat introduced the draft concept for the Transport Community yearly Summit dedicated to Green Mobility in 2024. As proposed, the two-day Summit will take place in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will be co-organised by TCT Secretariat and GIZ. Summer School will focus on the same topic in 2024. • The Chair and the European Commission welcomed the presented concept for the Green Mobility Summit. They underlined that the upcoming Summit should reference the Green agenda, fit for 55 and EU acquis. • The European Commission invited the Permanent Secretariat to further specify its plans regarding the foreseen deliverables for the Green Summit. • The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina invited all representatives to participate in the Green Mobility Summit in 2024. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee approved the draft concept for the Transport Community Green Mobility Summit and agreed to organise the 5th Social Forum 2024 in Bosnia and Herzegovina.</i></p>
9.	<p>Updates on the initial outcomes of Technical Assistance for collecting Road Safety KPIs on Seat Belts and Child Restraint Systems in the Western Balkans region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat updated RSC on the outcomes of Technical Assistance for collecting Road Safety KPIs on Seat Belts and Child Restraint Systems in the Western Balkans region. The final Report will be published in March 2024 and presented to the Technical Committee on Road Safety and RSC. • European Commission thanked the TCT Secretariat for the presented Report. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the information on the Technical Assistance for collecting Road Safety KPIs on Seat Belts and Child Restraint Systems in the Western Balkans region and is looking forward to seeing the final deliverable, as well as offering support and ensuring coordination by their experts with the consultants. The final Report will be presented at the RSC in 2024.</i></p>
10.	<p>State of play of Annex I of the TCT</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission updated RSC on changes in Annex I, which started earlier this year. The updated Annex I will be shared with RSC for adoption via written procedure as soon as ready. Highlights of the updated ANNEX I will be presented at the next RSC in 2024. <p><i>Conclusion: The revised Annex I will be proposed for the written procedure when ready, and the main elements will be presented at the next RSC in 2024.</i></p>
11.	<p>Information regarding European Court of Justice Rulings with relevance to the Contracting Parties of the Transport Community Treaty – update by the European Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission updated RSC on the latest Rulings of the European Court of Justice relevant to the Contracting Parties of the TCT. <p><i>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the information regarding the European Court of Justice Rulings relevant to the Contracting Parties of the Transport Community Treaty given by the European Commission.</i></p>
12.	<p>TODIS Operational Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCT Secretariat presented the TODIS information system, which has been fully put in place, its operational framework, and it will be used for future data collection for TEN-T reporting purposes. The European Commission noted the need for complementary with the TENTEC information system, which has been addressed by the TCT Secretariat in the presented operational framework. The Chair thanked for the well-prepared system, which will provide more accurate data and underlined the importance of TEN-T data management. <p><i>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the Transport Observatory Database/Information System (TODIS) operational framework, commended the official start of TODIS's operational period and pledged to undertake the necessary actions to ensure the consistent and regular feeding of the system with data.</i></p>
13.	<p>State of play of cooperation with the Observing Participants and presentation of draft Action Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TCT Secretariat informed RSC of the state of cooperation with Georgia, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova in 2023. Consequently, draft Action Plans for the Observing Participants mirroring the Action Plans for Western Balkans have been prepared, as well as light reports on acquis implementation and TEN-T. The European Commission commended the cooperation with the Observing Participants. European Commission updated the RSC on the additional resources, which have been

	<p>secured for 2024-2025 for the TCT Secretariat to fund the further integration of the observing participants in the TCT. The resources will also encompass funds for the technical assistance for the Observing Participants and the additional staff in the TCT Secretariat in this regard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The representative of Moldova thanked the TCT Secretariat and European Commission for their support. Moldova has implemented the National Accession Plan to align its legislation with EU acquis. Moldova expressed its wish to become a full member of TCT. • Ukraine's representative thanked us for the support and expressed further interest in enhancing cooperation with the transport community. • Representative of Georgia reported on the most significant legislation updates and expressed interest in future cooperation with the TCT and providing capacity building and technical assistance. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee members welcomed the engagement by the Observing Participants and looked forward to continuing closer cooperation in the upcoming period.</i></p>
14.	<p>Transport Community Treaty review information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TCT Secretariat informed the RSC that the TC Treaty is up for review in 2024. TCT Secretariat proposed establishing an informal working group by the end of 2023, which will consist of Contracting Parties and the European Commission to identify further areas of substantial improvement. The working group will be headed by the TCT Secretariat. • The European Commission thanked for the presented concept note and supported the proposed constitution of an informal working group to carry out a preliminary assessment of the current implementation of the Transport Community Treaty. The Commission underlined that a review would be an opportunity to identify gaps in substance and procedures. After the RSC, the TCT Secretariat will launch a call for nomination for the informal group to each Contracting Party to put the final Report in place by 1 May 2024. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the information on the Transport Community Treaty review (including roadmap with timeline), expressed no objection to the proposed approach and urged the Permanent Secretariat to commence the actions therein included.</i></p>

ADMINISTRATION

15.	<p>Adoption of the Decision on the Budget of the Transport Community for the year 2024 and Endorsement of the Annual Work Programme 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented a decision on the transport community's budget for the year 2024.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair of the Budget Committee, Ms Cristina Cuadra Garcia, presented the Budget Committee's Report dated 19 October 2023 indicating budget execution as of August 2023. Budget execution is expected to be similar to the previous year's. A two per cent increase in operating costs is envisaged for 2024. Draft budget 2024 also covers amendments to reimbursement rules as proposed for this RSC meeting. The proposed amendments from the last RSC meeting were introduced to the proposed Annual Work Programme 2024. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee adopted the Decision on the 2024 Budget of the Transport Community and endorsed the Annual Work Program of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat for 2024.</i></p>
16.	<p>Adoption of proposed changes to the Rules on Reimbursement of Expenses to Participants at the Meetings Organised by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCT Secretariat presented the main elements of changes to the Rules on Reimbursement of Expenses to Participants at the Meetings Organised by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat: a unified set of rules for each participant, the introduction of Daily Substance Allowance (DSA), increase of number of participants from 1-2 for the capacity building events. The new rules will be applicable as of 1 January 2024. The Chair welcomed proposed amendments to the Rules on Reimbursement. European Commission supported proposed amendments to the Rules on Reimbursement. All Technical Committees will be informed about the new rules at the next session 2024. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee adopted the proposed changes to the TCT reimbursement rules.</i></p>
17.	<p>Designation of the external auditor for the 2023 annual financial statements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCT Secretariat proposed to RSC to designate Deloitte as the external auditor for 2023, following the procurement procedure launched by the TCT Secretariat. <p>Conclusion: <i>Transport Community's Regional Steering Committee has designated an external auditor for the 2023 annual financial statements proposed by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat.</i></p>

