

Tirana, 10 April 2025

## Conclusions of the 6th Social Forum

### Strengthening Passenger Rights in the Western Balkans

Article 5 of the Transport Community Treaty<sup>1</sup> calls for the implementation of the relevant social *acquis* regarding transport and the promotion of the social dimension through the involvement of social partners and relevant stakeholders. In line with this, the Social Forum of the Transport Community was established in 2020 as a platform for dialogue between key transport social partners of the European Union and the Western Balkans. On 10 April 2025, the 6th Social Forum was held in Tirana, Albania, focusing on strengthening passenger rights in the Western Balkans. The forum brought together representatives from regional authorities, the European Commission, national enforcement bodies (NEBs), social partners to assess progress in implementing passenger rights, identify remaining challenges, and define future actions.

**Passenger rights are a fundamental element of a fair and accessible transport system.** Whether traveling by rail, ship, or bus and coach, passengers must be protected by a clear set of rights based on three key principles: **non-discrimination, accurate, timely, and accessible information, and immediate and proportionate assistance** in case of service disruptions. These rights contribute to **building trust in transport services, improving service quality, and aligning the Western Balkans with EU standards** in preparation for future EU membership. The establishment of **National Enforcement Bodies (NEBs)** and harmonized regulations is essential for ensuring that these rights are effectively enforced, providing passengers with efficient redress mechanisms when their rights are violated. Furthermore, enhancing the implementation of EU passenger rights legislation in the Western Balkans is crucial to strengthening the **legal and institutional framework**, increasing public confidence in transport systems, and ensuring compliance with the **Transport Community Action Plan on Social Issues and Passenger Rights**<sup>2</sup>. While progress has been made, challenges remain, particularly in the **transposition of EU passenger rights legislation, weak enforcement mechanisms, and limited awareness among passengers and transport operators**.

Building on the conclusions<sup>3</sup> of the 5th Social Forum, this edition marked a key step in advancing harmonized and effective passenger rights enforcement across all transport modes in the Western Balkans. The discussions highlighted best practices, regulatory advancements, and challenges in ensuring passenger rights compliance while also setting the foundations for the Next-Generation Action Plan on Social Issues and Passenger Rights (2025–2027).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/treaty-en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/TC-Action-Plan-Social-and-PAX-rights-Acquis\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/TC-Action-Plan-Social-and-PAX-rights-Acquis_WEB.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Conclusions-5th-Social-Forum-Final-Version-050724-comments-incorporated.pdf>

## THE SOCIAL FORUM OF THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY

1. **Reaffirms** the commitment of the Western Balkans to align national regulations with the EU legal framework on passenger rights, ensuring equal protections for all passengers across different transport modes.
2. **Welcomes** the progress made in the establishment of National Enforcement Bodies (NEBs). Participants recognized the crucial role of NEBs in overseeing and enforcing passenger rights and called for further strengthening of their capacity and independence.
3. **Encourages** Regional Partners to enhance enforcement mechanisms and complaint-handling procedures. The forum underlined the need for clear, efficient, and passenger-friendly complaint-handling mechanisms to ensure that passengers can effectively exercise their rights.
4. **Calls** for increased awareness and education on passenger rights. Regional Partners and transport operators are encouraged to conduct awareness campaigns and train frontline staff to improve compliance and ensure that passengers are fully informed of their rights.
5. **Recognizes** the need for better accessibility and inclusivity in passenger transport. The forum highlighted that accessible transport is a fundamental right and called for the full implementation of EU accessibility standards to ensure that all passengers, including persons with disabilities and reduced mobility, can travel with dignity and ease.
6. **Supports** the role of the Western Balkans Register of Road Undertakings (WBRRU) in improving passenger protection. The WBRRU was identified as a crucial tool for enhancing compliance and safety in the bus and coach sector, ensuring greater reliability and accountability in passenger transport.
7. **Encourages** regional cooperation and best practice exchange, including with the NEBs in the EU Member States. The forum emphasized the importance of continuous cooperation among Western Balkan authorities, with the EU institutions, the NEBs in the EU MS, transport operators, and social partners to promote a harmonized and efficient passenger rights framework and its enforcement.
8. **Welcomes** the development of the Next-Generation Action Plan on Social Issues and Passenger Rights (2026–2028). The forum supports the preparation of a forward-looking strategy that will address key challenges, propose innovative solutions, and set concrete actions to improve passenger rights enforcement across the region.
9. **Calls** upon national authorities to integrate digital solutions for passenger rights enforcement. The adoption of real-time passenger information systems, digital complaints platforms, and AI-driven monitoring tools was encouraged to enhance the transparency, accessibility, and efficiency of passenger rights enforcement.
10. **Encourages** Regional Partners to support legal and institutional reforms for stronger enforcement of passenger rights. The forum called for clear, enforceable, and harmonized regulatory measures to ensure seamless passenger protection in domestic and cross-border transport.
11. **Recommends** increased investment in training and capacity building for national institutions. To ensure effective enforcement of passenger rights, the forum emphasized the need for continuous professional development for regulators, transport operators, and enforcement bodies.
12. **Calls** on all Regional Partners to ensure that passenger rights remain an important priority in the EU integration process. Ensuring compliance with EU passenger rights regulations will be essential for further progress in the accession process and the alignment of regional transport systems with European standards.

13. **Encourages** all stakeholders to actively participate in the implementation of the Next-Generation Action Plan on Social Issues and Passenger Rights (2026 – 2028). The forum emphasized the importance of collective action in advancing passenger rights, ensuring compliance, and enhancing public trust in transport systems.
14. **Calls** on the Regional Steering Committee to take note of the conclusions of the 6th Social Forum at its next meeting in May 2025.
15. **Calls** on Ministers in charge of transport in the Western Balkans to reaffirm their commitment to implementing these conclusions at the Ministerial Council in December 2025.

The 6th Social Forum concluded with a collective commitment to further strengthening passenger rights in the Western Balkans, ensuring full alignment with EU standards, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and fostering regional cooperation.

