

Next Generation Rail Action Plan 2025 - 2027 for the Western Balkans



2024

List of Abbreviations

Annex I	Annex I to the Transport Community Treaty
BCPs/CCPs	Border Crossing Points/Common Crossing Points
CADAS	Common Accident Data Set
CARE database	Community database on road accidents resulting in death or injury
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CONNECTA	Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans
DEBO	Designated Body
DG MOVE	Directorate General for Mobility and Transport
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
eCMR	Digital version of the freight document CMR
eFTI	Electronic freight transport information
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
ERA	European Union Agency for Railways
EU	European Union
EU DEL(s)	European Union Delegation(s)
EU Member State(s)	European Union Member State(s)
EVR	European Register of Vehicle
eQMS	Electronic Queuing Management System
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFI	International Financing Institutions
IM(s)	Infrastructure Manager(s)
IPA	the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ITS	Intelligent Transport Systems
IWW	Inland Waterways
JASPERS	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions
JBCPs	Joint Border Crossing Points
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LCs	Level-crossings
MNSW	Maritime National Single Window
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoT(s)	Ministry(ies) of Transport
NIB	National Investigation Body
NS	Network Statement
NSA	National Safety Authority
OTIF	Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail
PIU	Project Implementation Units

PSO	Public Service Obligation
RAMS	Road Asset Management System
RIAMS	Railway Infrastructure Asset Management System
RIMN WB	Rail Infrastructure Managers Network of the Western Balkan
RAP	Rail Action Plan
RINF	European Registers of Infrastructure
RIS	River Information Services
RISM	Road Infrastructure Safety Management
RRA	Railway Regulatory Agency
RP_s	Regional Partners
RSC	Regional Steering Committee
RSA	Road Safety Audit
RSI	Road Safety Inspection
RU	Railway Undertaking
SEE Parties	Southeast European Parties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
SEED	System for Electronic Exchange of Data
TA	Technical Assistance
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission
TCT Secretariat	Transport Community Permanent Secretariat
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport networks
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSI(s)	Technical Specification(s) of Interoperability
TTF	World Bank Trade and Transport Facilitation Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VTMIS	Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System
WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework
WBRSO	Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory

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

Foreword

As we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty Establishing the Transport Community, 2024 marks an important milestone towards a more connected, resilient, and integrated transport network across the Western Balkans and beyond. Over the past five years, we have undertaken a concerted effort to lay the foundations for sustainable, modern, and efficient transport systems through the development and implementation of the comprehensive Action Plans. Created through joint efforts of the Transport Community, the governments from the region and their experts, these Action Plans are the result of the authorities' commitment to integrating their transport markets into the EU. They have also served as strategic roadmaps for aligning the transport policies and frameworks of our regional partners with EU standards and best practices.

While the success of this period is both undeniable and commendable, it is equally important to recognise that progress has not been uniform across the region. The varying pace and scope of implementation across our regional partners shows the need for renewed efforts and collective commitment. This divergence in progress serves as a reminder that, although we are moving in the right direction, there is still considerable work to be done to achieve full alignment and deeper integration within the Transport Community.

A New Political Reality and Unprecedented Momentum

The current political and institutional context provides us with a unique and unprecedented opportunity to accelerate progress. Today, we are witnessing a new political reality – one that is characterised by advancements in the EU integration process for the Western Balkans and the active participation of our observing participants, namely Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. This evolving political landscape, coupled with the rollout of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, has created fertile ground for deeper regional cooperation and a renewed sense of commitment in aligning with EU transport legislation. Moreover, 2024 witnessed the TEN-T Regulation revision which aims to reduce the environmental and climate impact of transport and to increase the safety and the resilience

of the TEN-T network. Finally, for the first time, this revision also regulates the integration of the six Western Balkan partners into the newly established Western Balkans-Eastern Mediterranean European Transport Corridor. In this context, it is not only necessary but essential to speed up the transposition of the EU acquis and to pursue reforms with greater determination.

A Critical Juncture and New Opportunities

As we approach the conclusion of the first generation of our Action Plans, and with the anticipated adoption of the Next Generation of Action Plans, we are presented with a unique opportunity to accelerate the transposition of the EU acquis and intensify our reform efforts. The need to act has never been greater, and the time has come for a renewed commitment to change. Now is the time for a new start, a new beginning.

A New Start, A New Momentum

The first five years of the Transport Community's work have demonstrated that meaningful progress is possible when there is political will, regional cooperation, and a shared vision for the future. The Green Lanes initiative, jointly steered by the Transport Community and CEFTA, is an illustrative example of this. However, we must also acknowledge that the disparities in implementation across our regional partners must be addressed with a sense of urgency. Success in the implementation of the Treaty and the associated Action Plans should not vary so widely from one partner to another. All regional partners must fully embrace the opportunities presented by the Transport Community. The disparities in implementation must be closed if we are to move forward as a united and cohesive Transport Community.

The Next Five Years: A Decisive Leap Forward

The next five years will be crucial in shaping the future trajectory of the Transport Community. This period represents a critical phase in our mission to foster greater connectivity, enhance economic resilience, and align with EU standards across all transport sectors. To fully capitalise on the new thinking that informs the Next Generation of Action Plans, we must advance the transposition of the EU acquis across all modes of transport, including road safety, railways, road, inland waterways, and maritime transport.

It is the time for a new way forward. The Transport Community is uniquely positioned to lead the region through this critical period of transformation. By working in concert and leveraging the momentum we have built over the past five years, we can ensure that the Western Balkans and our observing participants are fully integrated into the broader European transport network. The next five years offer a window of opportunity to implement the necessary reforms and to ensure that these reforms translate into tangible benefits for the citizens of the region.

Measuring Success: From Reforms to Real Impact

In the coming years, the success of our collective efforts will be measured not solely by the passage of reforms but by their effective implementation and the real-world benefits they deliver. The alignment with EU legislation will not only enhance regional connectivity and improve transport safety, but it will also serve as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development. These objectives are within our reach, but they will only be realised if we commit to speeding up our efforts and intensifying our focus on implementation.

Responsibility for a Shared Future

As we enter this new phase, it is imperative that we approach the challenges ahead with a sense of shared responsibility and unwavering commitment. The Transport Community will continue to provide support and guidance to our regional partners, but the ultimate responsibility for seizing this moment rests with each partner.

Once again, as we jointly shaped the Next Generation of Action Plans which offers a clear and comprehensive roadmap for achieving full alignment with EU transport legislation, it is up to each regional partner to take ownership of this process and to drive it forward. The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat remains committed to assisting each of our regional partners as per their needs on this way forward.

The next five years will define the future of transport in the Western Balkans and beyond. Let us ensure that they count. By embracing this new start and committing to a new way forward, we can jointly shape a future of a more connected, prosperous, and successful region.

Introduction

The first generation of five Action Plans (2020-2024) on Rail, Road, Road Safety, Transport Facilitation, and Waterborne and Multimodality was prepared to serve as a roadmap for the region to prioritise measures for improving transport across all modes and further facilitate the movement of goods and passengers. Moreover, it served to assist the regional partners in meeting the requirements stipulated under Annex I of the Transport Community Treaty.

The overall progress in the implementation of the first generation of Action Plans has been moderate and varies among Action Plans. The identified measures were/are in line with the commitments of the Transport Community Treaty (notably with regards to the acquis in ANNEX I) and other strategic documents (mentioned below) from both the region and the European Union. The same approach was used when drafting the Next Generation Action Plans.

During the 5th Ministerial Council in Skopje on 12 December 2023, it was announced that 2024 would mark the final year for the monitoring of the first-generation Action Plans (2020-2024) and that the process of drafting the Next Generation Action Plans for the period 2025–2027 would begin. The Next Generation of Action Plans are guided by insights gained from the existing Action Plans (2021-2024) and anticipate legal and strategic shifts in the upcoming period of 2025–2027.

The Next Generation Action Plans includes several ongoing measures from the previous action plans (2020-2024), primarily actions that were not fully accomplished during the indicated period, while excluding measures already completed by the regional partners. The Next Generation Action Plans are based on important lessons learned from the implementation of the previous Action Plans, resulting in clearer and more realistic objectives. Moreover, the Next Generation Action Plans include measures based on an updated EU legislative framework, as defined in the revised version of ANNEX I of the TCT, as well as other recent strategic documents, EU policy papers, and declarations/joint statements.

The measures identified within the Next Generation of Action Plans are defined based on the following documents:

- Transport Community Treaty
- Strategy for Smart and Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans from July 2021
- Transport Community Declarations from Summits, including declarations from Regional Conferences, such as the ITS Conference
- The New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the relevant Priority Actions for Integration into the EU single market
- EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 -Next steps towards Vision Zero
- Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030
Comprehensive Roadmap for Enhancing Green Lanes
- Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans

The Next Generation Action Plans (2025-2027) of the Transport Community were developed through close cooperation and coordination with all relevant stakeholders: regional partners, representatives from the European Commission, members of technical committees from all relevant sectors, and other pertinent institutions.

Draft versions were completed and endorsed at the technical level for Rail, Road, Road Safety, Waterborne and Multimodality, and Transport Facilitation in June 2024. The Next Generation Action Plans are expected to be endorsed by the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) at the 25th RSC meeting in Brussels in November 2024 and at the upcoming 7th Ministerial Council meeting to be held in Belgrade on 17 December 2024.

The Next Generation Action Plans of the Transport Community will continue to serve as a roadmap, outlining key steps and milestones with associated timeframes. Identified measures and actions will guide all regional partners and relevant stakeholders in achieving the objectives outlined in the strategic documents.

Overall, the Next Generation Action Plans aim to offer better and more sustainable services, enhance competitiveness, improve resilience, introduce smart transport systems, make the transport sector in the Western Balkans greener and safer, improve connectivity, reduce identified physical and non-physical bottlenecks, lower CO₂ emissions, and reduce overall travel costs. At the same time, the implementation of identified measures will further enhance the process of transposing the relevant legislation. Furthermore, they aim to improve maintenance practices, ensuring that the overall network meets the requirements of the TEN-T Regulation.

In particular, the full implementation of the Next Generation Action Plans will further support the region substantially achieve important milestones derived from Annex I of the Transport Community Treaty.

On this basis, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat will continue to produce its annual progress report, including monitoring the implementation of the Action Plans and the progress in transposing EU legislation as outlined in ANNEX I of the TCT. The scoring mechanism will follow the previously agreed-upon mechanism, with specific indicators for each phase of progress.

The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat will continue to play a vital role in supporting and assisting regional partners in their efforts to implement the measures defined under each Next Generation Action Plan, aiming to improve the EU transposition rate and the transposition rate of the acquis. Moreover, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat will continue to coordinate its activities with other supporting institutions, as well as with technical assistance offered through various EU instruments.

1. Next Generation Rail Action Plan

The first publication of the Rail Action Plan 2020-2024 focused on a roadmap for the rail market opening, the development of a sustainable and efficient Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in the Western Balkans, as well as on maintenance and safety elements in railway network and operations. The overall progress in implementing the Rail Action Plan was moderate. The implementation of actions foreseen within the rail action plan was supported by the TCT Secretariat and available instruments/assistance provided by the European Commission through its IPA program (CONNECTA) and the European Union Agency for Railway.

Before the endorsement of the rail action plan, the rail market in the Western Balkans was closed to private railway undertakings, which is against the requirements as set in Annex I of the TCT. Starting in 2015 in Vienna, the Berlin process² represented a significant change of direction, as all regional leaders agreed on a list of the “connectivity reform measures” that enabled the gradual opening of the rail market at the domestic level. However, alignment with the EU standards, specifically the ones listed in Annex I, requires further efforts. Currently, the rail market is open at the domestic level in four TCT Parties, and there are sixteen private railway undertakings dealing with freight transport and none on passenger transport.

The lack of competitiveness hinders sustainable transport and better services for passengers and freight. To address this, the regional partners have agreed to prioritise addressing the challenges related to market opening, fully implementing the EU interoperability legislation, and enhancing the railway sector’s overall governance. Moreover, the lack of maintenance causes an additional obstacle. All Regional Partners were advised to establish contractual relationships between infrastructure managers and relevant authorities to tackle this.

In terms of maintenance, three out of six regional partners established a Multi-Annual Infrastructure Contract between the infrastructure manager and relevant authority. Regarding the institutional framework, all regional partners made progress, but the process should continue in the future to fully align with the EU acquis in this area.

The Next Generation Action Plan covers almost 80% of Annex I of the TCT, which is nearly 30% more than the first Rail Action Plan. The Next Generation Action Plan consists of seven pillars. The pillars contain measures related to the EU transport legislation included in ANNEX I of the TCT, measures to enhance regional cooperation, and measures included in the Growth Plan and other strategic documents and political declarations. The action plan aims to prepare the environment for establishing a unified rail market in the Western Balkans that aligns with the EU transport legislation (as defined in ANNEX I of the TCT).

1.1. Content

The Next Generation Rail Action Plan for the Western Balkans consists of seven pillars:

- Market Access
- Train Driver licencing
- Railway Safety
- Interoperability
- Modernisation of the Railway Infrastructure
- Cooperation Western Balkans – European Union Member States
- Sustainable and Multimodal Measures

² https://www.berlinprocess.de/uploads/documents/chairs-final-declaration-2015_1714043784.pdf

1.2. Market Access

The foundation of a common regional rail market is a top priority for all stakeholders within the Transport Community. The following actions/measures aim to prepare all regional partners for the opening of the rail market at the domestic and regional levels: ensuring compliance with TCT provisions (as defined within the ANNEX I) to avoid market opening breaches at the domestic level and during the second transitional period; finalising the institutional framework with bodies like National Safety Agency (NSA), National Investigation Body (NIB), Railway Regulatory Agency (RRA), and Designated Body (DEBO); ensuring management, functional and financial independence of infrastructure managers for competitive rail market; improve the overall process of the network statement for railway infrastructure, service facilities statements for ports and terminals; implementing contracts to compensate Public Service Obligations on passenger transport as per EU regulations; as well as establishing of the multi-annual contracts between relevant authorities and infrastructure managers to ensure stability and effective management.

Action	Regional partners concerned, and deadlines ³		Relation with the TCT Annex I – European Union Legislation /New Growth Plan
	Transposition	Implementation	
Ensure the opening of the market at the domestic level	North Macedonia Q1 2026	North Macedonia Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 21 November 2012.
	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q4 2026	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q4 2027	
Ensure the opening of the market on a regional level and enter the second transitional period as per TCT Protocols.	Serbia, Montenegro Q1 2026	Serbia, Montenegro Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area, Interoperability Regulatory Area and Train Driver Licensing Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 21 November 2012. - Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/545 of 7 April 2016.
	Kosovo Q1 2026	Kosovo Q4 2026	
	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Q1 2027	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia Q4 2027	
Establish functioning institutions (NSA, NIB, RRA, DEBO)	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina - Q2 2025	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina Q2 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area, Interoperability Regulatory Area and Train Driver Licensing Regulatory Area closely related to: - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012. - Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016.
	North Macedonia - Q1 2025	North Macedonia Q3 2025	

³ The Regional Partners not mentioned have completed the action.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016. - Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/545 of 7 April 2016.
Ensure managerial and financial independence of the infrastructure manager	Albania Q1 2025 Bosnia and Herzegovina - Q1 2026	Albania Q2 2025 Bosnia and Herzegovina Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area closely related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012. - Directive (EU) 2016/2370 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016
Publish Network Statement for Railway Infrastructure	Albania Q1 2025 Bosnia and Herzegovina Q1 2026	Albania Q2 2025 Bosnia and Herzegovina Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory, closely related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012.
Publish Service Facilities Description (sea and river ports, terminals)	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q2 2025 Albania Q2 2025	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q4 2025 Albania Q4 2025	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area, closely related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012. - Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/545 of 7 April 2016. - Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/2177 of 22 November 2017.
Award a Contract to compensate Public Service Obligations on passenger transport and award procedure as per EU Acquis concerning the opening of the market for domestic passenger transport services by rail	All Regional Partners Q1 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area, closely related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulation (EC) No 1370/2007 amended with Regulation (EU) 2016/2338.
Ensure award of Multi-annual contracts between the relevant authority and the infrastructure manager	All Regional Partners Q1 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area, closely related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012.

Expected outcomes:

Opened rail market by all regional partners at the domestic level. Two of the regional partners have entered the second phase of the transitional period leading towards the market's opening at the regional level. Completion of the institutional framework for the NSA, NIB, RRA, and DEBO, ensuring their independent operation and sufficient resources and staffing. Improved publishing process of the comprehensive network statement for railway infrastructure, including the service facility statements for sea and river ports and terminals. Improved the overall compensation environment of public service obligations (PSOs) on passenger transport. Increased number of established multi-annual contracts between relevant authorities and the infrastructure manager.

1.3. Train Driver Licencing

Train driver licensing is critical for ensuring safe and efficient railway operations. They represent a combination of technical proficiency, regulatory compliance, and commitment to maintaining high safety standards in railway transport. The main focus will be on further implementing EU Directive 2007/59, Regulation (EU) 2019/554 and Regulation (EU) No 36/2010.

Action	Regional partners concerned, and deadlines		Relation with the TCT Annex I – European Union Legislation/New Growth Plan
	Transposition	Implementation	
Transpose and implement EU Acquis on the certification of train drivers operating locomotives and trains on the railway system.	All Regional Partners Q4 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Train Driver Licensing Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive 2007/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007. - Regulation (EU) 2019/554 of 5 April 2019 amending Annex VI to Directive 2007/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council.
Transpose and implement EU Acquis on models for train driving licences, registers, complementary certificates, certified copies of complementary certificates, examination centres and application forms for train driving licenses.	All Regional Partners Q4 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Train Driver Licensing Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Regulation (EU) 36/2010 of 3 December 2009. - Commission Decision 2010/17/EC of 29 October 2009. - Commission Decision 2011/765/EU of 22 November 2011.

Expected outcomes:

Transposed legislation related to the train driver licensing process. Ensured safe and efficient railway operations by guaranteeing technical proficiency, regulatory compliance, and a commitment to high safety standards in railway transport. Sustainable process of train driver licensing ensured by all regional partners.

1.4. Interoperability

All regional partners aspiring to integrate with the European TEN-T Network must comply and align their legislation with the regulations and standards defined in ANNEX I of the TCT. This includes interoperability of railway systems, enabling cross-border operations, and enhancing connectivity within the region and with the neighbours.

In order to enhance railway operations and integration, it is essential to transpose and implement the interoperability Directive 2008/57/EC and its updated version, Directive (EU) 2016/797, known as the 4th Railway Package. Additionally, all EU Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs) must be adopted and enforced. Additionally, there is a need to establish an electronic register of vehicles within the European Vehicle Register (EVR) and an electronic register and management system for railway infrastructure in line with the European Registers of Infrastructure (RINF).

Action	Regional partners concerned, and deadlines		Relation with the TCT Annex I – European Union Legislation /New Growth Plan
	Transposition	Implementation	
Transpose and implement the EU Acquis related to Interoperability from the 4th Railway Package	All Regional Partners Q2 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Interoperability Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive (EU) 2016/797 (4th railway package).
Transpose and implement all EU Technical Specifications for Interoperability	Bosnia and Herzegovina – Q2 2026	Bosnia and Herzegovina – Q4 2027	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Interoperability Regulatory Area.
	Others Q2 2025	Others Q4 2026	
Establish an electronic register of vehicles within the European Vehicle Register (EVR)	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q4 2025	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q1 2027	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Interoperability Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016. - Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1614 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2018.
	Others Q2 2025	Others Q4 2026	
Establish an electronic register of railway infrastructure, taking into account the existence of the European Registers of Infrastructure (RINF)	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q4 2025	Bosnia and Herzegovina Q1 2027	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Interoperability Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/777 of 16 May 2019.
	Others Q2 2025	Others Q4 2026	

Expected outcomes:

Transposed and initiated the implementation of the interoperability Directive. Strengthened enforcement of the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs). Established an electronic register of vehicles within the European Vehicle Register (EVR) and management system for railway infrastructure aligned with the European Registers of Infrastructure (RINF).

1.5. Railway Safety

The listed measures aim to establish mutual recognition of operating licenses, train driver licenses, safety certificates, and vehicle authorisations at a regional level, alongside implementing a Safety Management System. Additionally, certified maintenance workshops and streamlined national rules will contribute to standardised and efficient railway operations.

Action	Regional partners concerned, and deadlines		Relation with the TCT Annex I – European Union Legislation /New Growth Plan
	Transposition	Implementation	
The legislative, regulatory or other activities to achieve mutual recognition at the regional level of operating licenses, train driver licenses, safety certificates, and vehicle authorisation.	All Regional Partners Q2 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016.
Safety Management System implemented	All Regional Partners Q2 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016.
Entity in charge of vehicle maintenance, certified maintenance workshops	All Regional Partners Q2 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2025	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Commission implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/779 of 16 May 2019.
Clean-up of national rules	All Regional Partners Continuously	All Regional Partners Q4 2027	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Area and the Interoperability Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016.

Expected outcomes:

Mutual recognition of main rail documents by at least two regional partners. Improved and more advanced safety management system, lowered risks and further improved regulatory compliance and safety performance across all aspects of railway operations.

1.6. Modernisation of rail network infrastructure

Listed actions involve establishing a Rail Infrastructure Asset Management System, developing Strategy/Action Plans for priority regional railway projects, particularly those specified in the European Investment Plan (EIP), and preparing tender dossiers to enhance safety at level crossings.

Action	Regional partners concerned, and deadlines		Relation with the TCT Annex I – European Union Legislation /New Growth Plan
	Transposition	Implementation	
Railway Infrastructure Asset Management System (RIAMS) established	All Regional Partners Q2 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2027	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport.
Adopt a national rail infrastructure development strategy/ plan	All Regional Partners Q2 2025	All Regional Partners Q4 2027	Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and New Growth Plan Reform Agenda. Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012. - Regulation (EU) No. 1679/2024 repealing Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013.
Level-Crossings Safety Improvement – preparation of tender dossier	All Regional Partners Q4 2024	All Regional Partners Q4 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Regulatory Area, closely related to: - Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016.

Expected outcomes:

Established Railway Infrastructure Asset Management Systems. Drafted and approved Strategy/Action Plans for priority regional projects. Drafted and finalised tender dossiers for projects related to the Level-Crossings Safety Improvement.

1.7. Cooperation within the region

Listed actions involve establishing regional networks for Rail Regulatory Authorities, National Safety Authorities (NSAs), and National Investigation Bodies (NIBs) to enhance coordination, cooperation, and regulatory oversight across the region's railway systems.

Action	Regional partners concerned, and deadlines		Relation with the TCT Annex I – European Union Legislation /New Growth Plan
	Transposition	Implementation	
Establishing a Regional Network of Rail Regulatory Authorities	All Regional Partners	All Regional Partners	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Market Access Regulatory Area, closely related to:
	Q4 2025	Q4 2026	- Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012.
Establishing a Regional Network of NSAs	All Regional Partners	All Regional Partners	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Regulatory Area, closely related to:
	Q2 2025	Q4 2026	- Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016.
Establishing a Regional Network of NIBs	All Regional Partners	All Regional Partners	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the Railway Safety Regulatory Area, closely related to:
	Q2 2025	Q4 2026	- Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016.

Expected outcomes:

Established the above-listed bodies, improved coordination and streamlined governance of railway operations, and increased efficiency in handling safety and regulatory matters. Further enhancement of knowledge sharing and adoption of best practices among all network members.

1.8. Sustainable and multimodal measures

The listed actions focus on advancing digitalisation and e-freight capabilities by adopting legislation aligned with the EU Acquis. Additionally, efforts are directed towards promoting multimodality through preparing and approving action plans for developing a network of multimodal freight terminals. Enhancing resilience and sustainability in the rail sector is an additional priority.

	Regional partners concerned, and deadlines		Relation with the TCT Annex I – European Union Legislation /New Growth Plan
Action	Transposition	Implementation	
Digitalisation and e-freight			
Adopt relevant legislation to align with the regulation on electronic freight transport information (eFTI)	All Regional Partners Q4 2025	All Regional Partners Q1 2026	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the electronic freight transport information area, closely related to: - Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020.
Pilot eFTI platform	All Regional Partners Q4 2027	All Regional Partners Q4 2027	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport in the electronic freight transport information area, closely related to: - Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020.
Advancement of multimodality			
Preparation and approval of an action plan for the development of a multimodal freight terminal network developed under TCT TA on multimodality	All Regional Partners Q1 2025	All Regional Partners Q2 2026	Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans (TCT Secretariat, 2021). Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport, closely related to: - Regulation (EU) No. 1679/2024 repealing Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013.
Resilience			
Build and strengthen institutional capacities for infrastructure risk assessments, resilience planning and mainstreaming of climate adaptation measures across infrastructure sectors	All Regional Partners Continuously	All Regional Partners Q4 2027	Annex I.2 Rules applicable to Rail transport, closely related to: Regulation (EU) No. 1679/2024 repealing Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013.

Expected outcomes:

Enhanced efficiency and transparency in freight transport through digitalisation and the adoption of the eFTI. Further improvement of connectivity through the strengthening of multimodality. Strengthened institutional capacities for infrastructure resilience and climate adaptation measures are expected to mitigate risks, ensuring robust infrastructure systems capable of withstanding environmental challenges and enhancing the overall sustainability and resilience of transport networks.

1.9. Concluding Remarks

The measures outlined in the Next Generation of Rail Action Plans are crucial for enhancing the transposition of the relevant EU Rail legislation and ensuring compliance with the extended TEN-T Rail Network in the Western Balkans.

The Action Plan is expected to lead to the regional rail market opening by at least two regional partners by addressing challenges in the transposition of EU rail legislation. In addition, all regional partners are expected to fully comply with the Conditions relating to transition for rail transport stipulated in the Regional Partners individual protocols in the Transport Community Treaty.

The implementation of the Interoperability Directive and advancing with the enforcement of the EU Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs) will ensure efficient cross-border traffic without technical obstacles. It will result in reduced border waiting time and more efficient train operations.

All Regional Partners are expected to join the European Vehicle Register (EVR). Additionally, the modernisation of railway infrastructure through ongoing projects should improve the overall compliance rate with the TEN-T standards by 20%.

Establishing three Rail Networks – Regional Network of Rail Regulatory Authorities, Regional Network of NSAs, and Regional Network of NIBs – will further improve regional cooperation.

Sustainable and multimodal measures will level up all regional partners' digitalisation and e-freight capabilities by adopting legislation aligned with EU Acquis. Furthermore, the advancement of multimodality and improved resilience of the railway infrastructure is expected.