

24th Regional Steering Committee meeting

10 July 2024, Belgrade

Draft Minutes and Conclusions

- The 24th Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting was convened on 10 July 2024 in a hybrid format, combining in-person attendance at the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat headquarters with virtual participation. All RSC members except for Albania attended the meeting, alongside representatives from the three Observing Participants (Republic of Moldova and Georgia) and European Union Member States observers.
- Presiding over the meeting were the Chair of the Regional Steering Committee, Ms. Jasminka Kirkova, and the Co-Chairs from the European Commission Mr. Harvey Rouse and from point five onwards Ms. Mona Björklund. In her opening remarks, Ms Kirkova thanked everyone for their engagement during the Macedonian presidency and wished the Serbian colleagues success in their future presidency. She reiterated the importance of marking the 5th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty Establishing the Transport Community. Ms Kirkova also informed the attendees that Ms Elena Kochova had left the Ministry of Transport and that written information on her replacement in the TCT bodies would follow. Mr. Harvey Rouse emphasised that many important steps had been taken in the first half of 2024 towards EU integration of the Western Balkans region. Following the opening of accession negotiations for Bosnia and Herzegovina, acknowledged at the last RSC meeting, Montenegro has now, overall, met the interim benchmarks for two crucial acquis chapters (23 and 24). These activities set the tone for subsequent milestones towards the EU accession of all Regional Partners. Moreover, the EU formally started accession negotiations for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Regarding the TCT Secretariat's further work, EU acquis alignment remains crucial.
- The agenda for the 24th RSC meeting was approved.

POLICY

1.	<p>Presentation of progress on the "Safer to School Guidelines" (part of the Action Plan on Road Safety)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TCT Secretariat informed the RSC that three visibility events were organised to promote the "Safer to School" guidelines, a publication by the Ministry of Infrastructure of Slovenia translated into the languages of the Region. These events took place in Tirana, Pristina, and Podgorica. Three additional events are planned for autumn for the remaining Regional Partners. Discussions with other institutions and organisations that might support further funding/financing of pilot projects in this regard are ongoing. • The Chair reiterated the importance of raising awareness about road safety, especially for the youngest. She supported the continuation of similar projects in the future. • The European Commission highlighted the outstanding work of the TCT Secretariat in promoting safety for children in the Western Balkans. All Regional Partners were invited to continue with their efforts to improve road safety and reduce the number of road fatalities in the Region to attain the goal of 50% reduction by 2030. • The representative of Serbia, Ms. Jasmina Radonjic, fully supported the presented initiative. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the TCT Secretariat's efforts to promote Safer to School guidelines and supported pilot projects in Western Balkans to improve safety in school</i></p>
----	---

	<p><i>zones in line with the amended Directive (EU) 2019/1936 of Road Infrastructure Safety Management Directive 2008/96/EC.</i></p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Presentation of the outcomes from the Study on Railway Level Crossings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TCT Secretariat presented a Summary Report on Preparing Project Documentation for Railway Level crossing safety in the Western Balkans. Key outcomes of the project, aligned with the Rail Action Plan's priority to modernise the rail network infrastructure in the Western Balkans, were listed, including financial aspects, main conclusions, and the proposed way forward. Regional partners will receive documentation for 139 selected level crossings and a template of technical specifications for further investments. • The Chair underlined the importance of the presented study. North Macedonia has completed basic technical documentation for several level crossings. Since the Safe and Sustainable Transport Program (SSTP) is in place, it would be good to prioritise the most critical level crossings and finance them through SSTP. North Macedonia has already finalised and applied to one project for ITS from SSTP. • The European Commission complimented the collaboration between the TCT and Regional Partners in this regard and emphasised the importance of further implementation of improvements to level crossings. The European Commission looks forward to seeing the results and has encouraged regional partners to continue working on enhancing safety at rail-road intersections with the support of the SSTP. • The representative of Serbia informed that Serbia has applied for five projects under the SSTP, and three have already been approved. • The representative of Montenegro informed that Montenegro has finalised and submitted two applications for the SSTP, which have been approved. Moreover, they plan to submit an additional application for the next call in September. • The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterated the importance of the work carried out by the railway technical committee in preparing this initiative. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the information on the completed Study on Railway Level Crossings led by the TCT Secretariat. Furthermore, the RSC welcomed the potential financing of the identified level crossings through the available instrument, the Safe and Sustainable Transport Program.</i></p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Cooperation with Observing Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TCT Secretariat provided a brief update on the status of cooperation with the Observing Participants. Overall, the rhythm, quality, and substance of engagement are on the rise but remain fully dependent on the level of ambition, implication, and cooperation of the Observing Participants. Notable progress has been made with the Republic of Moldova, with an initial review mission accomplished and the first tenders for the technical assistance budget about to be launched. • The European Commission (EC) continues to work to improve transport connections between Observing Participants and the European Union. Moreover, the representative of the EC acknowledged the progress made in implementing the grant and the activities carried out with the support of the TCT Secretariat. The European Commission looks forward to further cooperation between the TCT Secretariat and the Observing Participants. • The representative of the Republic of Moldova, State Secretary Mircea Pascaluta, highly appreciated the support and technical assistance provided by the TCT Secretariat. Moreover, he acknowledged the importance of the TCT Secretariat's study visit to Moldova organised in June and hopes to

	<p>enhance cooperation and endorse the Action Plan to integrate further. Moldova remains fully committed to the goal of joining the EU.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The representative of Georgia thanked the TCT Secretariat for all the assistance and capacity-building initiatives provided in the previous period. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) welcomed the progress made in the cooperation with the Observing Participants. The TCT Secretariat, RSC, and the representative of the Commission expressed regret that the presentation of Ukraine had to be postponed. All participants transmitted condolences to their colleagues in the Ukrainian administration.</i></p>
4.	<p>Presentation on the Possibility of Monitoring the Next Generation TCT Action Plans within the Common Regional Market Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TCT Secretariat informed the RSC about its proposal to include the presentation of the Next Generation Action Plans and subsequent annual progress reports on acquis implementation at the annual Sherpas meetings of the Common Regional Market initiative. The final version of the Common Regional Market (CRM V2) will be shared with the Sherpas for their approval, followed by an endorsement at the Berlin Process Summit meeting, which will be held in Berlin on 14 October. • The Chair supported, in principle, the presentation of progress on the Action Plans at the annual Sherpas meeting, underlying that that should be for information only and that Transport Community structures (RSC, Ministerial Council) should continue to adopt and monitor its implementation. • The European Commission stated that the Sherpas meeting can serve as a high-level platform to enhance the visibility of the progress of the Next Generation Action Plans and supported the initiative in this regard. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the initiative and the proposal of presenting the progress report of the Next Generation of Transport Community Action Plans yearly at the level of the Sherpas (high-level representatives from Prime Ministers' offices) meeting. This will be done after the New Generation Action Plans and subsequent progress reports are endorsed at the RSC and Ministerial Council levels.</i></p>
5.	<p>Presentation of the Transport Community Treaty review report following informal group meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat informed the RSC about the work of the Informal Working Group, which aimed to identify any potential needs for changes, but not negotiate such changes, in order to improve the overall implementation and the functioning of the Transport Community Treaty, in accordance with the conclusions from the last Regional Steering Committee meeting held on 11 December 2023 in Skopje. The Treaty came into effect as of 1 May 2019, making it deemed for revision in 2024 per Article 42. The assessment exercise was carried out by a joint informal working group consisting of representatives of the European Commission, the other TCT contracting parties, and the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community under a mandate endorsed by the Regional Steering Committee. The Treaty Review aims to identify potential substantive changes likely to positively contribute to the Treaty's overarching scope and operational changes likely to improve the proper functioning and implementation of the Treaty. • The Chair suggested that the Ministries of the regional partners should express their formal position through formal documents and recommendations, which would express each regional partner's official position following the European Union's official position. • European Commission thanked the TCT Secretariat for the presented Report and supported the proposed move forward. During the informal working group meetings, the European Commission presented a list of questions for the Regional Partners, aiming to improve the

	<p>implementation of legislation in Annex I of the Treaty and Action Plans. EC reiterated that the whole exercise's objective was to provide a forum to identify potential needs for changes that could improve the Treaty's functioning. The European Commission is now preparing a Council Recommendation for authorisation to open negotiations on the revision of the Transport Community Treaty. The European Commission will notify the Regional Partners and initiate bilateral discussions if authorised.</p> <p>Conclusion: RSC took note of the presented Informal Report. After the European Commission completes the next step in the revision process, this point will be discussed at one of the subsequent Regional Steering Committee meetings.</p>
6.	<p>Presentation of the outcomes of TAIEX training on 112 and e-call, and proposals for future steps in the alignment with EU Acquis on e-Call (Annex I of TCT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TCT Secretariat presented the main outcomes of the TAIEX Regional Workshop on 112 & e-Call held in February 2024 in Skopje. Each Regional/Observing Participant already has policy papers concerning the deployment of 112 and eCall, but Decision No 585/2014/EU on the deployment of the interoperable EU-wide eCall service and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 305/2013 supplementing Directive 2010/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the harmonised provision for an interoperable EU-wide eCall still need to be approximated. TCT will continue cooperating with the other relevant international organisations to ensure cross-sectoral developments and horizontal coordination to speed up the implementation process of 112 and eCall. • The Chair underlined the importance of implementation of 112 and eCall. • The European Commission thanked the TCT Secretariat for the training outcomes, welcomed the initiative and called Regional Partners for further implementation to make it functional in practice. The European Commission underlined that eCall only works if vehicles are equipped, if mobile telecommunication networks are able to transmit eCall voice and data, and if public safety answering points are able to receive and handle eCalls on the whole territory. Cooperation between the different services responsible for these aspects is key. <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the presented information on the current state of play and the proposed way forward regarding implementing 112 and eCall. The Regional Steering committee members will foster cross-sectoral cooperation to bridge the gap which needs to be filled in view to deployment of eCall services. The Transport Community was tasked to continue cooperation activities with the relevant actors to streamline projects that can speed up deployment where gaps can be observed.</p>
7.	<p>State of Play: Revision of the Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 – Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The European Commission informed the Regional Steering Committee that Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1153 and (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 was adopted. The Regulation will enter into force on 18 July. • The European Commission presented the upcoming activities related to the work of the Western Balkan Eastern Mediterranean Coordinator. In addition, within the scope of reporting on the development of this Core Corridor, RSC is requested to grant access to

	<p>Transport Observatory Data Information System (TODIS) data to the Western Balkan Eastern Mediterranean (WBEM) Coordinator team. The representative of DG MOVE, Mr Arunas Jurevicius, stressed the importance of the participation of the Regional Partners in the WBEM ETC Forum meetings, and suggested that reimbursement for one representative from the Ministry is covered from the TCT Secretariat's budget.</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged that Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1153 and (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 was adopted. The Regional Steering Committee agreed to grant the WBEM Coordinator team access to the data provided in TODIS to prepare the Core Corridor Report. RSC agreed that TCT should cover participation costs at the WBEM Corridors Forum for representatives of the Regional Partners' ministries to allow Regional Partners to participate in the Corridor meetings. The presentation by the European Commission will be shared with all participants by the TCT Secretariat.</i></p>
8.	<p>State of Play - New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission presented information on the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. The Reform Agenda's first draft is scheduled to be adopted at the end of August to become operational as of autumn 2024. • TCT Secretariat informed that the Next Generation Action Plans will mirror activities from the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. The Secretariat also informed the RSC members about the activities connected to transport facilitation in the context of the Green Lanes initiative. It highlighted the agreed Roadmap "Taking forward the EU-CEFTA/Western Balkans Green Lanes" towards fully digitalised pre-arrival information exchange at all major CEFTA-EU crossing points and their infrastructure improvements. The Secretariat also informed RSC members regarding the work on the 11 BCP/CCP fiches prepared by the CEFTA and TCT Secretariat. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the information on the current state of play of the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. Moreover, RSC welcomed and ensured its support to the actions foreseen within the New Growth Plan, including the actions in the context of the Green Lanes (Transport Facilitation) as well as the actions related to the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems and e-freight.</i></p>

ADMINISTRATION

9.	<p>The first discussion on the draft 2025 TCT budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TCT Secretariat presented the first outline of the 2025 budget. The draft budget for 2025 amounts to EUR 3,120,200.00, which is at the same level as 2024. • The amount of EUR300,000 presented in the current draft under Studies/Technical Assistance budget line, shall be allocated to the budget line 1.5 Office costs as it represents an investment in the platform itself. The modification shall be reflected in the final draft version in November. The adoption of the draft 2025 Budget is envisaged for the December RSC. • The European Commission reiterated that the primary objective for 2025 should be to effectively utilise this budget to make significant progress on acquis implementation included in Annex I of the Transport Community Treaty.
----	--

	<p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee agreed in principle with the presented draft Budget 2025. The final document will be presented for adoption at the December RSC meeting.</i></p>
10.	<p>Presentation of the Transport Community's Budget Committee Annual Report 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair of the Budget Committee, Ms Cristina Cuadra Garcia, presented the Annual Report of the Budget Committee for 2023. The report reflects the main conclusions of the two Budget Committee meetings that took place in 2023, as well as the proposed calendar of meetings for 2024. • The European Commission thanked the TCT Secretariat for responsible budget planning and transparent work in the course of 2023. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the Transport Community's Budget Committee annual report 2023.</i></p>
11.	<p>Mid-Year Report on the Transport Community's Annual Work Programme 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented Mid-Year Report on the Transport Community's Annual Work Programme 2024. It highlights the key achievements and ongoing initiatives in each mode of transport, in particular Green Mobility Summit, Capacity Building in rail, promotion of Safer to School Guidelines, enhancing Green Lanes initiative, participation in various international conferences, and engaging both the Regional Partners and Observing Participants. Detailed information and statistics are contained in the Report. • The European Commission thanked the TCT Secretariat for the excellent presentation of the first six months of its work. It underlined that many important outcomes are yet to be finalised and endorsed by the end of the year. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomes the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat's "Mid-Year Report of the Annual Work Programme 2024.</i></p>
12.	<p>Discussion on the possible improvement of the Transport Community's Staff Regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCT Secretariat presented a possible proposal for improvement of the Rules on Recruitment and TCT Staff Regulations on improvement and streamlining of the selection process of staff members, adding possibility for internships at the TCT Secretariat and extending the paid maternity leave from 16 to 20 weeks. • Following the discussion in the Budget Committee, the TCT Secretariat presented information on the impact of inflation/consumer prices to the value of the salaries of the TCT Secretariat's staff and proposed a way forward. • TCT Secretariat proposed an agreement in principle on 'Local Staff' (Articles 2.1(6) and 2.2 of the Staff Regulations) engagement for technical tasks (driving, maintenance, cleaning etc.), to be under discretion and decision of the TCT Secretariat Director. • Western Balkans representatives present at the meeting supported in principle the initiative of extending maternity leave. • Western Balkans representatives present at the meeting were not in favor of the other proposed changes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The European Commission took note of the first presentation of the scope and outline of these proposed amendments and acknowledged the purchasing power loss of the Staff of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat as a result of inflation in the years since the adoption of the current salary grid. The European Commission supported in principle the objectives of the possible proposals by the TCT Secretariat, but stressed that any amendment to the Staff Regulations and the Rules on Recruitment would need to be subject to further discussions on the basis of concrete proposals. <p>Conclusion: <i>The RSC supported the proposal for extending the maternity leave. The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat shall draft a decision on extending maternity leave for adoption at one of the next RSC meetings. Other items will be reverted to at the subsequent RSC meetings.</i></p>
--	--

AOB

13.	<p>Cooperation with RESPA on the Regional Mobility Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCT Secretariat informed RSC about ReSPA's initiative of designing a Regional Mobility Programme for approximately 25 civil servants from the Region, aiming to strengthen capacities of the civil servants and public administrations across the Western Balkans. ReSPA secures the financial costs of the Programme, and TCT Secretariat will support regional initiative and collaboration by hosting two civil servants from the Programme. Online meetings between all international/regional organisations involved in this project are scheduled for the forthcoming period to agree on detailed steps to be followed. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the information and update regarding cooperation with RESPA on the Regional Mobility Programme.</i></p>
14.	<p>Information on Entry Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Authorisation (ETIAS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCT Secretariat presented information given by Frontex on modifications to EES and ETIAS system for entrance of non-EU visa free travellers to the Schengen Zone. <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the presented information given by Frontex on the Entry Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Authorisation (ETIAS).</i></p>

Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Jasminka Kirkova

Co-Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Mona Bjorklund

