

Concept Paper for Panel Discussion:

Western Balkans and Europe: Sustainable and resilient rail investments for a successful extension of the TEN-T Network

Date: 24.09.2024, 15:00-15:45

Organised by: UNIFE and Transport Community Treaty Permanent Secretariat

Location: InnoTrans, UNIFE stand 630 in Hall 27, Berlin

Introduction

The integration of the Western Balkans' transport markets into the European Union (EU) represents a critical step in fostering regional connectivity, economic growth, and sustainable development. The Transport Community, in collaboration with the six Western Balkan partners, plays a pivotal role in this integration by assisting in the adoption and implementation of EU transport legislation and supporting projects that enhance connectivity within the region and with the EU.

The revised TEN-T Regulation, which extends the EU rail network to include the Western Balkans, Ukraine, and Moldova, presents significant investment opportunities. This extension is not only a strategic move towards deeper integration but also an opportunity to enhance the resilience and sustainability of the regional rail network. However, the success of these investments hinges on addressing technical challenges and ensuring that relevant EU legislation is effectively adopted and implemented.

Objectives of the Panel Discussion

This panel discussion aims to bring together key stakeholders to explore the vision, opportunities, and challenges associated with advancing the integration of the TEN-T network with EU partner countries. The discussion will focus on the perspectives of European rail suppliers, the Transport Community, and representatives from the Western Balkan partners, highlighting the state of play and future prospects in infrastructure, rolling stock, and signalling projects. By addressing both the strategic and technical aspects of this integration, the discussion will contribute to a clearer understanding of the path forward and the steps necessary to achieve a sustainable and resilient rail network across the region.

Participants and Key Points

- **Mr Enno Wiebe**, UNIFE Director General
- **Mr Matej Zakonjsek**, Director, Transport Community Permanent Secretariat
- **Ms Marina Boskovic**, Director General Montenegro Railways
- **Mr Sinisa Ivanovski**, Director General Macedonian Railways
- **Mr Naser Krasniqi**, Director General Infracos and Chair of Western Balkan Rail Infrastructure Managers Network
- **Mr Ergys Verdho**, Director General Albanian Railways

Structure of the Panel Discussion (45 min)

Mr Enno Wiebe will open the discussion, introduce the speakers and moderate the event by asking some of the questions below to the other panellists. He will start by providing an overview of the expectations and opportunities for European rail suppliers in the Western Balkans, considering the expansion of the TEN-T network. He will highlight the market potential for rail suppliers, investment opportunities, and the importance of adhering to EU standards **(5 min)**.

Mr Matej Zakonjsek will follow with introductory remarks offering an overview of the Transport Community's work and future challenges **(5 min)**.

The panel discussion will start with the following potential set of questions. **Each panellist will have a total of aprox. 5 min for their intervention**. If time allows, the floor will be open to the audience before Enno Wiebe wrap up the discussion and provides the conclusions.

Questions and key points to be highlighted by each participant

To Matej Zakonjsek, Transport Community **(5 min)**:

- Can you outline the key areas where the Transport Community is focusing its efforts to integrate the Western Balkans into the EU transport network?
- What are the main challenges you anticipate in the process of adopting and implementing EU legislation across the Western Balkans?
- How does the revised TEN-T Regulation align with the Transport Community's long-term goals for the region, and what are the next steps?

To Marina Boskovic, Director General Montenegro Railways **(5 min)**:

- Could you provide an update on the current state of rail infrastructure projects in Montenegro and their alignment with the TEN-T objectives?
- What are the main challenges Montenegro Railways faces in implementing EU legislation and ensuring technical compatibility with the EU network?
- How do you see the role of international partnerships in advancing rail infrastructure development in Montenegro?

To Sinisa Ivanovski, Director General Macedonian Railways **(5 min)**:

- As the newly appointed Director General, what are your immediate priorities for Macedonian Railways in the context of TEN-T integration?
- Can you share insights into any ongoing or upcoming projects that are critical to Macedonia's integration into the TEN-T network?
- What support do you need from the EU and the Transport Community to overcome challenges in adopting EU standards and legislation?

To Naser Krasniqi, Director General Infrakos and Chair of Western Balkan Rail Infrastructure Managers Network **(5 min)**:

- How is Infrakos preparing to align its infrastructure projects with the revised TEN-T Regulation?
- What are the key infrastructure and signalling projects currently underway or planned in Kosovo that will contribute to the TEN-T network?
- What technical and financial challenges do you foresee in the integration process, and how can they be addressed?

To Ergys Verdho, Director General Albanian Railways **(5 min)**:

- As the newly appointed Director General, what are your strategic priorities for Albanian Railways in the context of TEN-T expansion?
- Can you discuss the most significant infrastructure projects in Albania that are aligned with the TEN-T network?
- How do you plan to address the technical and legislative challenges associated with integrating Albania's rail network with the EU?