

25th Regional Steering Committee meeting

14 November 2024, Brussels

Draft Minutes and Conclusions

Representatives from the Regional Partners Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia attended the meeting. Observing Participants, including the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, were also present, alongside representatives from the European Commission, Council of the EU, and EU Member States as observers.

The meeting was chaired by Ms Jasmina Radonjić, RSC member representing Serbia in its role as the current Regional Steering Committee Presidency, and co-chaired by Ms Mona Björklund from the European Commission.

The agenda for the 25th RSC meeting was approved.

POLICY	
1.	<p>Endorsement of the Next Generation Action Plans 2025 – 2027 for the Western Balkans for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Road B) Road Safety C) Rail D) Transport Facilitation E) Waterborne Transport and Multimodality <p>The European Commission welcomed the new Generation Action Plans, describing them as ambitious yet realistic while ensuring coherency with other objectives for the region (e.g., from the Growth Plan). It placed the Action Plans in the context of recent enlargement developments. The Commission also expected the Action Plans to be fully implemented within the agreed timelines.</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomed the documents presented and emphasised its interest in ensuring that the implementation of actions continues to be supported by various initiatives and events organised by the TCT Secretariat, as has been the case thus far.</p> <p>Montenegro reported that the new Railway Law has been approved by the Government and submitted to the European Commission for assessment.</p> <p>Serbia requested that all transport-related reform measures undertaken with the assistance of the Permanent Secretariat under the Reform Agenda/Growth Plan and progress achieved by each Regional Partner should be discussed as a separate agenda item at subsequent RSC Meetings. For the December RSC Meeting, it was agreed under the AoB item that the best way to report on this topic should be considered.</p> <p>Albania emphasised that, in light of the defined Reform Agenda and upcoming activities related to their negotiation process with the European Commission on Chapters 14 and 21, additional support from the TCT Secretariat would be highly appreciated.</p>

	<p>North Macedonia informed about latest development of the Law on Railway system and suggested adopting a more balanced approach to TCT-organised events throughout the year to avoid clustering most events in the last quarter.</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee, in principle, endorses the Next Generation Action Plans for Rail, Road, Road Safety, Transport Facilitation, and Waterborne and Multimodality (2025–2027) for the Western Balkans. Serbia is completing the administrative process to endorse the New Generation of Action Plans and Republic of North Macedonia will start the governmental procedure after the RSCM..</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, the Committee commits to strengthening engagement across all levels of internal structures to support the effective implementation of these identified measures, aiming to advance and reinforce the overall transport sector in the region.</i></p> <p><i>The Committee acknowledges the significant efforts and support provided by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat, the European Commission, and the technical committee members throughout the drafting process. It looks forward to continued support from all stakeholders involved.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, the Regional Steering Committee recommends that the Next Generation Action Plans be presented to the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community at the upcoming Ministerial Meeting, which is scheduled for 17 December in Belgrade.</i></p>
2.	<p>Presentation of the Next Generation Action Plans 2025-2027 for the Observing Participants of the Transport Community for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Road B) Road Safety C) Rail D) Waterborne Transport and Multimodality <p>The European Commission welcomed the preparation of these Action Plans, as they serve to structure and prioritise the efforts of the Observing Participants to align their legislation with the EU acquis and enhance integration with the EU transport market.</p> <p>Moldova highlighted the challenging process of drafting the Action Plans, particularly in railways. It emphasised the importance of TCT cooperation, the support provided by the Secretariat, and the critical role of the technical assistance received in facilitating their efforts. Moldova also appreciated the overall work the Secretariat and the PIU carried out.</p> <p>Georgia expressed satisfaction with being part of TCT cooperation and collaboration with the TCT Secretariat. It specifically acknowledged the PIU for its technical assistance and the organisation of technical committees to support the Observing Participants.</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledges the Next Generation Action Plans (2025–2027) for the Observing Participants of the Transport Community. Furthermore, it recommends the forthcoming presentation of these plans to the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community at the upcoming Ministerial Meeting scheduled for 17 December in Belgrade.</i></p>
3.	<p>Endorsement of the yearly Progress Report on the Implementation of the Transport Community Action Plans and EU Acquis (Annex I of the TCT) for the Western Balkans and presentation of the current status of the report for the Observing Participants</p>

	<p>The Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community presented the Fourth Progress Report on Action Plans and the EU Acquis Progress Report for 2024.</p> <p>Serbia expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for its efforts in preparing the report. Furthermore, Serbia proposed that challenges related to implementing the Action Plan and the EU Acquis Progress Report should be discussed at each RSC Meeting, along with any potential modifications to the reporting process. The Secretariat should report on progress during the reporting period, considering comments received from Technical Committee members. Additionally, reports and challenges discussed in Technical Committee meetings should be submitted to the RSC along with proposed solutions to address them. This approach will streamline progress and better support Regional Partners in achieving their goals.</p> <p>Montenegro informed the meeting that an additional joint Border Crossing Point (road) between Serbia and Montenegro will be established.</p> <p>North Macedonia informed the meeting that comments on the report from Technical Committee members have been submitted, and all feedback will be incorporated into the final document.</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina underlined that an additional update on Annex I implementation will be provided within the next five days to be included in the report's final version.</p> <p>The European Commission welcomed the progress report, which provides a useful snapshot of the progress achieved by the Regional Partners on acquis alignment. The Commission supported Serbia's initiative and emphasised that dedicated thematic discussions on the implementation of the Action Plans one every six months during RSC meetings could be beneficial for their implementation.</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledges the 2024 Progress Report on the Implementation of the Transport Community Action Plans and EU Acquis (Annex I of the TCT) for the Western Balkans and acknowledges the report's status for the Observing Participants.</i></p> <p><i>The Committee recommends the presentation and formal acknowledgement of the Progress Report on the Implementation of the Transport Community Action Plans and EU Acquis (Annex I of the TCT) for the Western Balkans and the presentation of the report for the Observing Participants to the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community at the forthcoming Ministerial Meeting, scheduled for 17 December in Belgrade.</i></p>
4.	<p>Information on Cooperation with the Parliaments of the Regional Partners of the Western Balkans</p> <p>The Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community presented an overview of its engagement with the parliaments of the Western Balkans' Regional Partners. Recent visits to the parliaments of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the progress achieved and outlined the steps necessary for alignment with EU legislative standards and practices. These ongoing collaborative efforts aim to foster a shared understanding of transport-related challenges and promote legislative alignment, thereby advancing the integration of the Western Balkans' transport markets into the EU.</p>

	<p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomes the information on cooperation with the parliaments of the Western Balkans, as presented by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat. The Committee underscored the importance of maintaining a regular, structured dialogue between the Transport Community and regional parliaments to ensure continued political support and legislative alignment. This engagement is anticipated to strengthen the implementation of the Transport Community Acquis, contributing to regional integration and sustainable development within the transport sector.</i></p> <p><i>The Regional Steering Committee members recommend conducting this engagement annually, following the adoption of the yearly progress reports on the Acquis implementation and TENT alignment.</i></p>
5.	<p>Information on the Conclusions of the 5th Social Forum of the Transport Community (Sarajevo, June 2024)</p> <p>The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat presented the key outcomes of the 5th Social Forum in Sarajevo in June 2024. The forum underscored the importance of inclusive dialogue, capacity building for civil society organisations (CSOs), and establishing a Regional Twinning Initiative to connect the European Union and regional non-governmental organisations (NGOs) specialised in transport and infrastructure. Discussions centred on ensuring that the green mobility transition is socially just and inclusive, particularly within the ongoing Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) transport projects and Growth Plan.</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the conclusions of the 5th Social Forum (Sarajevo, June 2024) and committed to advancing the social aspects of the Acquis, as outlined in Annex I of the Transport Community Treaty. The Committee emphasised the importance of capacity building for CSOs to enable their active participation in implementing and monitoring transport projects.</i></p> <p><i>The Regional Steering Committee will come back in December 2024 regarding establishing the Regional Twinning Initiative and looks forward to reviewing the concept note at the next Regional Steering Committee meeting on 16 December in Belgrade.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, the Regional Steering Committee recommends the presentation of the conclusions of the 5th Social Forum to the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community at the upcoming Ministerial Meeting scheduled for 17 December in Belgrade.</i></p>
ADMINISTRATION	
6.	<p>Information on the Transport Community draft Budget 2025 (second discussion)</p> <p>The Budget Committee Chair, Ms Cristina Cuadra Garcia, gave an introductory address, reflecting on the work of the Budget Committee during 2024. The Chair also highlighted various Budget Committee discussions, including those on salary indexation and the impact of inflation. She expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for its efforts, transparency, and the preparation of reports and to the Regional Partners for their involvement in the overall activities. Additionally, she emphasised the importance of regular communication between the Budget Committee and RSC Members, noting that this communication channel must remain active to support the workflow of both TCT bodies.</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented the Draft Budget for 2025.</p>

	<p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee agreed, in principle, with the proposed draft Budget 2025. The Decision on the Budget will be presented for adoption at the Regional Steering Committee on 16 December.</i></p>
7.	<p>Information on the draft of the Transport Community Annual Work Program 2025</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented the Draft Annual Work Programme of the TCT for 2025, outlining key highlights, milestones, and planned activities, including:</p> <p>a) The Transport Digitalisation Summit for the Western Balkans and Observing Participants. b) The Annual Summer School and Social Forum. c) Monitoring, supporting, and reporting on implementing the Next Generation Action Plans 2025–2027. d) Monitoring measures stemming from the reform agenda of the New Growth Plan, as agreed between the Western Balkans partners, Moldova, and the European Commission.</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee members welcomed the Transport Community's draft Annual Work Program 2025. The final document will be presented for its endorsement to the Regional Steering Committee at the upcoming meeting on 16 December in Belgrade.</i></p>
8.	<p>Decision on the proposal for changes to the Transport Community's Staff Regulations</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented draft amendments to RSC Decision 2019/3, updating Article 10.4 of Annex II, "Staff Regulations of the Transport Community."</p> <p>The amendments made present changes on maternity leave to the staff regulations, while, upon production of a medical certificate, maternity leave with full pay shall be 20 weeks (regular maternity leave) or 24 weeks in specific cases.</p> <p>Conclusion: The RSC adopted, in principle, the draft of the RSC Decision, with Serbia providing written notification upon completing its internal procedure. The proposed Decision amends Decision 2019/3 of the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community, dated 5 June 2019, specifically Article 10.4 of Annex II, "Staff Regulations of the Transport Community."</p>
9.	<p>Information on the outcomes of the Audit report for the 2023 Accounts of Transport Community Permanent Secretariat</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented the Auditor's report for the 2023 Financial Statements of the Transport Community on which the Auditor has issued an unqualified opinion (<i>clean bill of health</i>).</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the Auditor's report for 2023.</i></p>
10.	<p>Information on the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community, Belgrade, 17 December 2024</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented information and the agenda for the upcoming Ministerial Council meeting, scheduled for 17 December 2024 in Belgrade.</p>

	<p>The Presidency expressed its wish to welcome all Ministers of Regional Partners and Observing Participants to Belgrade.</p> <p>The European Commission confirmed that the Western Balkan Eastern Mediterranean Corridor Coordinator, Mr Marinescu, will participate in the Ministerial Council.</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat emphasised the importance of confirming ministerial participation. Each Regional Partner is requested to confirm, as soon as possible, details of Ministerial delegations and requests for bilateral meetings.</p> <p>Detailed agenda for the Ministerial Council will be shared by the Secretariat next week.</p>
11.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow up on July's RSC agenda on transport facilitation (Enhancing Green Lanes, Improved Customs Cooperation, and Modernisation of Border Crossing Points) <p>The TCT Secretariat provided an update on the progress regarding the 11 BCP/CCP fiches, one of the pillar activities outlined in the Roadmap on Enhancing Green Lanes, Improved Customs Cooperation, and Modernisation of Border Crossing Points, as endorsed by the Western Balkans Leaders' Summit in May 2024 in Kotor, Montenegro.</p> <p>The preparation of the fiches is in its final phase. This process was conducted based on existing studies, inputs, and extensive consultations with the Green Lanes Committee, the European Commission, and the CEFTA Secretariat. The final review is being carried out in line with the contributions and comments received by 31 October.</p> <p>For information purposes, members of the Regional Steering Committee have received an explanatory note, including draft fiches relevant to each Regional Partner.</p> <p>Conclusion: <i>The Regional Steering Committee welcomed the information on the work carried out on 11 Border Crossing Points/Common Crossing Points fiches, which could form part of the deliverables for the following EU—Western Balkans Summit in December 2024.</i></p> <p><i>The European Commission emphasized that it did not had time yet to discuss this agenda item with the Member States, as it was only added to the agenda at a later point in time. In this regard, the Commission will report to the subsequent RSC meeting of 16 December in case the Member States have additional points to raise on this agenda point.</i></p>

Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Jasmina Radonjić

Co-Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Mona Björklund

