

26th Regional Steering Committee meeting

16 December 2024, Belgrade

RSC Minutes and Conclusions

Representatives from all Regional Partners participated in the meeting. The Republic of Moldova and Georgia were also in attendance as observers, alongside representatives from the European Commission (DG MOVE and NEAR) and European Union Member States.

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

In her opening remarks, Ms Mona Björklund, representing the European Commission, provided a recap of 2024, underscoring key developments and notable progress achieved throughout the year, which she described as pivotal. She highlighted the renewed momentum towards EU enlargement, citing several significant milestones: the initiation of accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina; Montenegro meeting the interim benchmarks for the “fundamentals” chapters 23 and 24; Albania's opening of the Fundamental Cluster; the formal start of accession negotiations for Ukraine and Moldova; and overall progress in policy reforms.

Ms Björklund also noted the enhanced engagement with partners and tangible steps taken towards establishing a single transport market. She emphasised the importance of the new Growth Plan in 2024, which has provided a framework for advancing reform agendas. Additionally, the final agreement on the new TEN-T Regulation, which entered into force in 2024 and includes a dedicated corridor for the Western Balkans, was acknowledged as a major achievement.

The European Commission reaffirmed its strong commitment to continued progress on legislative alignment and transport integration. A notable example includes the Green Lanes fiches, which are set to be endorsed at the upcoming EU-Western Balkans Six Summit.

The agenda for the 26th RSC meeting was approved.

	POLICY
1.	<p>Endorsement of the yearly report on the Development of the indicative Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) extension of the Comprehensive and Core Networks in the Western Balkans</p> <p>The Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community (TCT Secretariat) presented the fourth <i>Annual Report on the Development of Indicative TEN-T Extensions of the Comprehensive and Core Network in the Western Balkans</i>. The report provided an overview of the latest developments on the TEN-T network and the infrastructure conditions for each mode of transport. Compliance rates remain uneven across transport modes, with maintenance and securing adequate funding identified as key challenges for the region.</p> <p>The Presidency commended the work undertaken by the Transport Community, highlighting the importance of the report which also can serve as a good source of data for WBEM Forum needs and thus helping to avoid repeated communications. The representative of Albania</p>

	<p>expressed hope that the <i>TODIS</i> information system would be further improved in the future to fully realise its functionality, including the generation of reports and forecasts. The representative of North Macedonia mentioned that a major challenge to achieving adherence to TEN-T standards is the availability of financing for all priority projects. Similarly, the representative of Montenegro identified the lack of financial resources as one of the key hurdles to TEN-T compliance.</p> <p>The European Commission acknowledged the complexity and significance of the report, particularly recognising the effort involved in data collection by the Regional Partners. While the progress in certain areas was recognized, the lack of green infrastructure and digitalisation on the TEN-T network in the region calls for action, notably as this report does not yet include the additional indicators on sustainability and digitalisation from the new TEN-T regulation.</p> <p>The European Commission further emphasised the importance of creating synergies in the implementation of the TEN-T network with other initiatives (e.g., with the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region), stressing that strategies must be developed and executed in a coordinated manner.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee endorses the yearly report on the Development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the Comprehensive and Core Networks in the Western Balkans.</p> <p>Regional Steering Committee recommends that the yearly report on the Development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the Comprehensive and Core Networks in the Western Balkans is to be presented to the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community at the upcoming Ministerial Meeting, which is scheduled for 31 January 2025 in Belgrade.</p>
2.	<p>Presentation of the yearly report on the Development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the Comprehensive and Core Networks in the Observing Participants</p> <p>The Presidency noted that progress over the past year has been marginal, emphasising that the status of the TEN-T key networks in the Observing Participants requires urgent action.</p> <p>The European Commission commended the report, while acknowledging the challenges associated with data collection. Considering the overall poor condition of the TEN-T network in the three observers, it was recognized that substantial effort will be required to bring the infrastructure up to EU standards. Nevertheless, the importance of implementing the TEN-T to integrate the transport markets of the Observing Participants into the EU market was reiterated.</p> <p>The representative of Moldova outlined that one of their key objectives is to develop infrastructure; however, progress to date has been limited. It was noted that while current infrastructure requires rehabilitation, the main railway corridor is undergoing significant reconstruction. Moldova, in cooperation with the EU and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), is working to establish standards aligned with the TEN-T. A feasibility study is currently underway for the first highway connecting Chişinău with Romania.</p> <p>The representative of Georgia highlighted the considerable work ahead to achieve meaningful progress. It was reported that the rail modernisation project is on track for completion next year, alongside the near-finalisation of 90% of the East-West highway. Furthermore, maritime</p>

	<p>port developments are progressing through their construction phases, and a new airport for Tbilisi is expected to be completed by 2028.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee acknowledges the yearly report on the Development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the Comprehensive and Core Networks in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The Report provides a comprehensive assessment of the current status of the TEN-T Network in the observing participants against the relevant quality standards, as well as an overview of the upgrading initiatives currently ongoing and their likely impact on short to mid-term.</p> <p>It recognises the challenges of aligning the TEN-T Network with the standards set by Regulation 1679/2024 and commends the observing participants for their efforts and progress over the past year. Advancing TEN-T compliance and transport market integration requires strategic investment plans, substantial funding, and targeted interventions to maximise benefits and align with European standards.</p> <p>Finally, the Regional Steering Committee recommends that the TEN-T Report is presented to the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community at the upcoming Ministerial Meeting scheduled for 31 January 2025 in Belgrade.</p>
3.	<p>Endorsement of the Five-year rolling work plan for the development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core network in the Western Balkans</p> <p>The Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community presented the Five-Year Rolling Work Plan for the development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core networks in the Western Balkans.</p> <p>The Presidency emphasised that joint planning is essential to achieving EU standards. As part of the Growth Plan and facility reforms, it will be necessary to meet specific conditions to secure funding for infrastructure. Regional Partners also reiterated the critical importance of financial resources for advancing these initiatives.</p> <p>The European Commission acknowledged that, while the region is already making substantial investments, an investment gap remains. It was noted that significant challenges persist in meeting deadlines stemming from the TEN-T Regulation. Furthermore, green and digital transformations are expected to introduce additional complexities. However, the Growth Plan and the new TEN-T regulation were recognised as providing significant momentum for the implementation of the TEN-T in the region. In order to enhance regional coordination, the importance of fully participating in the Corridor Forum meetings was reiterated.</p> <p>In response to calls for additional funding, the Commission emphasised that, under IPA III and the Growth Plan, funding levels for the Regional Partners are already approaching those of Structural and Cohesion Funds allocated per capita to EU Member States. The focus must be on prioritisation and on implementing the existing project pipeline.</p> <p>It was further observed that requests for technical assistance (TA) on mature investment projects have been limited, and this issue requires greater attention. Joint planning is particularly important to ensure alignment of projects and secure cross-border connectivity. Recognising that it is not feasible to rehabilitate all infrastructure simultaneously, a strategic and prioritised approach is required, considering both short-term and long-term perspectives.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee endorses the Five-year rolling work plan for the development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core networks to the Western Balkans and the identification of priority projects of regional interest.</p>

	<p><i>The Committee recommends that the Five-year rolling work plan for the development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core networks to the Western Balkans is to be presented to the Ministerial Council of the Transport Community at the upcoming Ministerial Meeting, which is scheduled for 31 January 2025 in Belgrade.</i></p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><i>Presentation of the TCT Annex I Acquis Status Report 2024 for the Observing Participants</i></p> <p>The Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community presented the <i>TCT Annex I Acquis Status Report 2024</i> for the Observing Participants. The report provides an overview of the current alignment status of Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia with the relevant acquis under the Transport Community Treaty. It tracks the observers' performance and outlines future planning based on a defined set of performance indicators.</p> <p>In addition, the report delivers a comprehensive assessment of the key challenges ahead and offers tailored recommendations to accelerate progress towards alignment with the acquis.</p> <p>The European Commission acknowledged the considerable commitment and ambition displayed by all three observers on acquis alignment, yet also stressed the importance of ensuring not only the effective transposition of the acquis but also its proper implementation and the development of adequate administrative capacity.</p> <p><i>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee acknowledges presentation of the TCT Annex I Status Report 2024 for Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.</i></p> <p><i>It takes due note of the current status of alignment of the observing participants with the relevant acquis and salutes the regulatory and legal alignment processes currently ongoing. Advancing on the policy reform path requires a thorough review and prioritisation of the entire Annex I acquis, strengthened efforts for effective transposition and implementation and sustained engagement with the Transport Community.</i></p> <p><i>The Regional Steering Committee further recommends the report's presentation to the Transport Community Ministerial Council during its upcoming meeting on 31 January 2025 in Belgrade.</i></p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><i>Endorsement of the Annual report on the implementation of the Guidelines on transport of dangerous goods</i></p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented the Third Annual Progress Report on the implementation of the Transport of Dangerous Goods (TDG) guidelines. The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) welcomed the progress achieved by Georgia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, and Serbia in publishing the translations of ADR, RID, and ADN into their respective domestic languages in the 2023 version. The report provides a comprehensive overview of activities across each regional partner and observation participant, designed to facilitate further development in this area.</p> <p>The Presidency raised the following issues for discussion among RSC members:</p>

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 (1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sustainability of the reported events and simultaneously addressing the main weaknesses of all Western Balkans partners; • Mechanisms for the RSC to support the public administration of WB partners; • Potential modifications to the current reporting methodology focusing on the assistance provided by the TCT Secretariat to accelerate progress <p>The European Commission found the report to be particularly valuable, acknowledging the complexity of this domain and the positive impact of the range of activities undertaken, notably with regards to the level of awareness of the field in the region. The Regional Partners were invited to make use of the recommendations of the report and continue efforts to implement Transport of Dangerous Goods-related acquis.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee endorses the 2024 Annual Report on the Implementation of Dangerous Goods Guidelines and encourages all Regional Partners and Observing Participants to translate the relevant international agreements' Annexes, which will enter into force on 1 January 2025, into the local language(s). Consistent follow-up should be envisaged for all recommendations.</p>
6.	<p>Endorsement of the Annual report on the implementation of the Western Balkans Smart and Sustainable Strategy</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented the Third Progress Report on the implementation of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS) in the Western Balkans. The Report provides a comprehensive overview of the progress achieved in implementing the SSMS across the region, highlighting key achievements, persistent challenges, and opportunities for further improvement. The chapters are structured to deliver an in-depth analysis of progress under each flagship initiative, categorised within the three main pillars of the strategy: Sustainable Mobility, Smart Mobility, and Resilient Mobility. The concluding chapter offers strategic recommendations and outlines the actions required to advance the region's transport objectives.</p> <p>The Western Balkans continue to rely heavily on oil-derived fuels across all transport modes, while the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles remains minimal—constituting less than 1% of the vehicle fleet compared to over 18% in the EU. The prevalence of older vehicles, with the majority aged between 10 and 20 years, leads to higher energy consumption and increased pollutant emissions. This underscores the urgent need for sustainable mobility initiatives aimed at reducing emissions and aligning regional transport systems with EU environmental standards.</p> <p>Key measures, such as investments in railways, multimodal transport systems, cleaner vehicle technologies, and the advancement of e-mobility, are essential for the Western Balkans to achieve its environmental objectives. These steps will also support the region's broader goal of integration with the EU's single market, promoting sustainable, modern, and efficient transport solutions.</p> <p>The European Commission commended the report and the advancements made across the three strategic objectives – Sustainable, Smart, and Resilient Mobility, but also specifically highlighted the continuing challenge of keeping up with the evolving legislative framework when it comes to sustainability and digitalisation.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee endorses Annual report on the implementation of the Western Balkans Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy.</p>

7.	<p>Information regarding European Court of Justice Rulings with relevance to the Contracting Parties of the Transport Community Treaty – update by the European Commission</p> <p>The European Commission updated the RSC on the latest Rulings of the European Court of Justice relevant to the TCT's Contracting Parties.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the information regarding the European Court of Justice Rulings relevant to the Contracting Parties of the Transport Community Treaty given by the European Commission.</p>
8.	<p>Information regarding the outcomes of the Study for Strengthening Regulatory Framework for Passenger Rights in the Western Balkans</p> <p>The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat presented the outcomes of the Study for Strengthening the Regulatory Framework for Passenger Rights in the Western Balkans. The Study comprises reports on the current state of play, gap analysis and needs assessment, anticipated costs, a comprehensive regional roadmap, and tailored roadmaps for each Regional Partner, with a strong focus on social inclusion and accessibility. It further outlines pilot projects and capacity-building initiatives as critical steps to enhance passenger rights compliance and promote regional integration.</p> <p>Both the Presidency and the European Commission (EC) commended the document. They expressed support for the detailed roadmap, recognising its importance in advancing passenger rights and fostering greater alignment with EU practices.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee acknowledged the information regarding the Outcomes of the Study for Strengthening Regulatory Framework for Passenger Rights in the Western Balkans.</p> <p>The Regional Partners commit to intensifying efforts to achieve legal approximation, supported by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat's guidance and technical assistance.</p>
9.	<p>Information regarding the Regional Pilot project: Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in Transport Policy and Projects in the Western Balkans</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented the regional pilot project, Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in Transport Policy and Projects in the Western Balkans, as a key action arising from the Conclusions of the 5th Social Forum. The pilot project aims to foster the exchange of experiences and strengthen the capacities of Civil Society Organisation (CSO) representatives across the Western Balkans, enabling more active and meaningful participation in transport and infrastructure projects. The initiative will build on existing EU programmes that focus on empowering civil society in the region, while also exploring partnership opportunities offered by the Open Society Foundation to maximise impact and resources.</p> <p>The European Commission expressed support for the initiative, while also reiterating the importance of cooperating with the Commission's existing initiative in the region providing technical assistance to CSOs.</p> <p>A representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina proposed consolidating two core objectives of the project—knowledge exchange and capacity building—to create a more streamlined and effective approach. This integration would ensure greater coherence in delivering</p>

	<p>tangible results and achieving the project's overarching goal of fostering improved civil society engagement and alignment with EU transport policy standards.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee supported the Regional Pilot project Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in Transport Policy and Projects in the Western Balkans to enhance knowledge and expertise in transport projects and policy.</p> <p>At the same time, the Regional Steering Committee commits to supporting initiatives that will further enhance cooperation with NGOs and civil Society.</p>
	ADMINISTRATION
10.	<p>Adoption of the Decision on the Budget of the Transport Community for the year 2025</p> <p>TCT Secretariat presented a decision on the Transport Community's Budget for the year 2025.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee welcomed and adopted the Decision on the 2025 Budget of the Transport Community. Serbia supported the adoption of the Budget 2025 in principle, and the formal notification will follow in writing.</p>
11.	<p>Endorsement of the Transport Community Annual Work Program 2025</p> <p>The TCT Secretariat presented the Annual Work Programme for 2025, highlighting key priorities and initiatives for the upcoming year.</p> <p>A major focus will be the Digital Mobility Summit for the Western Balkans and Observing Participants, which will serve as a strategic platform to advance the European Union's vision for digital transformation in the transport sector. The Summit will explore how digitalisation, smart technologies, and data-driven solutions can revolutionise the mobility landscape, improve efficiency, and enhance transport sustainability across the Western Balkans and the three Observing Participants.</p> <p>To maximise impact, potential financial partnerships with key stakeholders will be explored. Additionally, the possibility of organising the Summit back-to-back with other relevant events will be considered to ensure synergies and broader engagement within the transport community.</p> <p>Conclusion: The Regional Steering Committee members endorsed the Transport Community's Annual Work Program for 2025.</p> <p>The RSC members supported the proposal to organise the Summit back-to-back with the ERTICO ITS European Congress in May 2025, as well as the Secretariat's further steps in finding an appropriate financial partnership.</p>

Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Jasmina Radonjić

Co-Chair of the Regional Steering Committee
Ms Mona Björklund

