



THESSALONIKI CONNECTIVITY FORUM

WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD NETWORKS OF CHANGE

(Thessaloniki, July 7th, 2022)

Joint Communiqué

The participants of the Thessaloniki Connectivity Forum (hereafter Participants) recognised the significance of sustainable trade and transport connectivity as a cornerstone of the economic and social integration of the EU and the Western Balkans.

Participants acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the significance of effective and efficient flow of goods and services, as well as the need to work together in a productive and timely manner, with a view to supporting trade and transport facilitation.

On this background, participants highlighted the establishment of the Green Corridors/Lanes within Western Balkans during the COVID-19 pandemic as a successful example of regional cooperation and recognised the substantial contribution of regional organisations in the implementation of this initiative.

Participants welcomed the renewed support by the Leaders to the implementation of the EU-Western Balkans Green Lanes initiative, expressed at the EU-Western Balkans Brdo Summit of 6 October, 2021 (Brdo Declaration, point 17).

Participants expressed their commitment to work closely together for the extension of the Western Balkans Green Corridors/Lanes to the borders with EU Member States in line with the conclusions from the EU-WB Brdo Summit, while recognising that this initiative is without prejudice to specific controls on goods or transport means and workers inherently and habitually linked to crossing external borders of the EU single market, the customs union or the Schengen area.



Participants welcomed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on the electronic data exchange between the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR) of the Hellenic Republic and the Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia, intended to establish the first operational EU-CEFTA Green Lane road BCP.

With a view to supporting smooth and efficient trade participants agreed to step up their cooperation to sharing data between EU and CEFTA, in compliance with EU legislation. In particular, they recognised the need to include all border agencies in the Green Lane concept.

Participants welcomed the preparatory activities, to be carried out in strict compliance with EU rules, on the additional Memoranda of Understanding on the electronic data exchange between Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency and Montenegro Revenue and Customs Administration and between Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency and Albanian General Directorate of Customs and encouraged other EU Member States to join.

Mindful of the need for further investment in rail and road connections, including (re)establishment of major city rail connections in the Western Balkans and between Western Balkans and EU, as well as in green multimodal transport networks, participants explored ways for the effective implementation of the EU Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans.

Participants acknowledged that inclusive regional economic integration and the effective implementation of the Transport Community Action Plans for rail, road, road safety, transport facilitation and waterborne transport will help maximise the benefit from investments stemming from the EIP.

Building on the existing cooperation, as well as on the productive exchange of ideas and insights at the Thessaloniki Connectivity Forum roundtable and break-out sessions, participants reiterated their active engagement in promoting sustainable trade and transport connectivity both within the Western Balkans and with the EU, through regular consultations, exchange of best practices and joint actions.