

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ORDERS

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

European Integration and Economic Development

Adnan Ćerimagić
December 2021.



There are both reasons and space for the development and modernisation of highways and railway traffic in BiH, as well as for a significant increase in the number of rail passengers. This will, of course, require vision, projects and investments.



The Transport Community, with EU financial support, can serve as an important and concrete instrument of support in the development of this vision, project design and implementation.

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In cooperation with:



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1.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the number of people killed in traffic accidents has decreased by a third.¹ This is the result of a combination of amendments to traffic laws, the introduction of European Union (EU) standards, and investment in the development and modernisation of road infrastructure and signalisation, but also increased awareness of the importance of road users' responsibility. Therefore, over five hundred lives were saved in BiH over ten years.

However, the death toll on Bosnia and Herzegovina's roads is still high. Despite the progress, 83,000 people have suffered minor injuries in road accidents over the past decade, and another 16,500 have been seriously injured. More than three thousand lives were lost, which is approximately the number of inhabitants of the municipality of Han Pijesak.² The number of deaths is high compared to the EU. During 2018, BiH roads took 8 lives per 100,000 inhabitants, twice as many as in Slovenia.

The EU has improved the safety of its roads through a common policy called Vision Zero.³ In line with this policy, legal frameworks have been improved and harmonised, and new and better standards are being continuously introduced. In addition, the EU has invested in infrastructure development and modernisation. It therefore records a continuous decline in the number of deaths. From 2000 to 2020, the number of deaths in the 27 EU member states fell by about seventy percent annually. In 2020 alone, about 38,000 lives were saved – or a city the size of Šibenik. Although the differences between EU members are significant, on average the EU has the safest roads in the world.

In order for BiH to get closer to the EU average in the next ten years and save even more lives, the harmonisation of laws and standards with those in the EU will have to

continue, but also accelerate. In addition, investments in the construction and modernisation of infrastructure will be needed, as well as the continuation of enhancement of responsibility of traffic participants.

In addition to investments in the development of the highway network, which have proven to be up to six times safer than other types of roads, an important aspect should be the development of railway traffic. Most fatal accidents occur in private vehicles, so increasing the share of passengers using rail contributes to safety. This would also help protect the environment, i.e., air quality, which would improve the health of residents and save additional lives.

Compared to BiH, although smaller, Slovenia has four times more kilometres of motorways and about 200 kilometres longer (and more modern) railway network. In 2018, out of 100 road and rail passengers in Slovenia, as many as 30 were transported by rail. In BiH, only 3 out of 100 passengers were transported by rail.⁴ The reason for this is the fact that in most parts of BiH, the residents do not have the option of travelling by rail.

Due to all the above, there are both reasons and space for the development and modernisation of highways and railway traffic in BiH, as well as for a significant increase in the number of rail passengers.⁵ This will, of course, require vision, projects and investments.

One of the instruments available to BiH institutions striving to work on this – from harmonising BiH laws and standards with those in the EU to investing in the construction and modernisation of road and rail infrastructure – is the Transport Community of the EU and the six Western Balkans countries, which was founded in 2017.

This analysis is divided into four chapters. After the *introductory part*, the second chapter addresses in more detail the above *Transport Community*. In the third chapter, the analysis examines *the situation in Tuzla Canton* and possible

¹ Bihamk, "Informacija o saobraćajnim nezgodama, njihovim uzrocima i posljedicama u BiH u 2020. godini" [Information on traffic accidents in BiH in 2020, their causes and consequences], March 2021. https://bihamk.ba/assets/upload/Informacija_o_saobra%C4%87ajnim_nezgo.pdf

² Bihamk, "Informacija o saobraćajnim nezgodama, njihovim uzrocima i posljedicama u BiH u 2020. godini" [Information on traffic accidents in BiH in 2020, their causes and consequences], March 2021. https://bihamk.ba/assets/upload/Informacija_o_saobra%C4%87ajnim_nezgo.pdf

³ European Commission, "What do we do", 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/what-we-do_en

⁴ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, "In 2018, 23% more passengers travelled through Slovenian ports than in 2017", 29 October 2019. <https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/news/Index/8457>

⁵ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Saobraćaj 2019." [Traffic 2019], April 2020. http://www.bhas.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2020/TRA_00_2019_TB_00_BS.pdf

ways in which membership in the Transport Community can be used to improve the quality of life and create conditions for better connectivity, safety and faster economic development of BiH. The fourth chapter, in addition to *a set of conclusions*, offers *specific recommendations* for all those in BiH to whom the Transport Community may be of interest.

2.

TRANSPORT COMMUNITY AS MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU

Road and rail transport in the EU is harmonised and based on common rules.⁶ According to the European Commission, “transport is a fundamental sector for and of the EU economy”.⁷ Transport services in the EU are part of a network of around 1.2 million private and public companies, employing 11 million people. In 2017, the transport sector earned about 650 billion euros. Common rules for transport in the EU have also made it the safest in the world. The possibility of harmonisation, membership and access to such a market therefore represents a great opportunity for every country and economy, including BiH.

Talks on establishing a Transport Community between the EU and the Western Balkans have been going on for years. However, these talks were not realised until 2017, when the treaty on its establishment was signed by the European Commission and the governments of the Western Balkan countries.⁸

Although initially modelled on the Energy Community founded in 2005 with its office in Vienna, the Transport Community has brought with it many innovations. Thus, for example, membership in the Transport Community is open to only the six countries of the Western Balkans, while the Energy Community also includes some Eastern European countries, such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

The Transport Community covers the area of road, rail, inland waterway and maritime transport, while air transport is not included. The objective of the Community is to extend the rules, principles and policies of the transport market in the EU to the countries of the Western Balkans through a legally binding framework.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Treaty provided for the establishment of the Secretariat of the Transport

Community, with headquarters in Belgrade. It also stipulates political bodies – the Ministerial Council and the Regional Steering Committee – as well as technical committees and the Social Forum, to enable the monitoring of development and the achievement of Community objectives. The European Commission participates in these bodies on behalf of the EU, and EU member states can attend as observers.

The Treaty also set out a detailed list of EU legislation and standards that the Western Balkans need to comply with, as well as detailed procedures for the Western Balkans to adopt new laws and standards that the EU will adopt in the future. The Treaty envisages the right of the Court of Justice of the European Union to make legally binding decisions for the countries of the Western Balkans, which also paves the path to this court. This is an important novelty in the overall relationship between the EU and the region.

The Treaty stipulates that when a Western Balkan country fully harmonises its legislation with that of the EU, upon recommendation of the European Commission and based on the decision of EU member states, it becomes an equal participant in the EU transport market, and opens its transport market to the EU.

80 percent of the Transport Community’s budget is funded by the EU and the rest by the governments of the Western Balkans. BiH’s contribution is 3.55 percent.

For the countries of the Western Balkans, including BiH, its institutions, legislation and public policies, the Transport Community is thus a great opportunity but also a challenge.

Challenges for BiH emerged at the very beginning. In July 2013, the European Commission signed the Transport Community Treaty with all governments in the Western Balkans except for BiH. The reason was the opposition of the Government of the BiH entity Republika Srpska. The Government insisted that the BiH state not be represented in the Community bodies (exclusively) by the BiH Council of Ministers. The European Commission considered that this would not be in line with the agreed procedures of the Transport Community, but would also make the decision-making processes more complicated and lengthier.

⁶ European Commission, “Transport in the European Union Current Trends and Issues”, March 2019. <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/2019-transport-in-the-eu-current-trends-and-issues.pdf>

⁷ European Commission, “Transport in the European Union Current Trends and Issues”, March 2019. <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/2019-transport-in-the-eu-current-trends-and-issues.pdf>

⁸ Transport Community, “Treaty establishing the Transport Community”, 27 October 2017. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22017A1027\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22017A1027(01)&from=EN)

Therefore, it conditioned the financial support for infrastructure projects in BiH by signing the Treaty in the same manner as with all other governments in the Western Balkans.⁹ After weighing the advantages and disadvantages, the agreement was reached and the BiH Council of Ministers subsequently signed the Treaty in Sarajevo, on 18 September 2021.¹⁰ This showed once again that when the EU has a concrete offer for BiH and treats it like any other country in the region, different levels of government in BiH find a way to meet the set requirements.

Thus far, the most important achievement of the Transport Community Secretariat is participation in an initiative that enabled free transport of goods at a time when, due to the pandemic, governments in the region and Europe decided for border closure. Together with other regional organisations, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Secretariat of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the requirements were met for the opening of the so-called green corridors and for unimpeded trade between the countries of the region.¹¹ This example of cooperation between the three regional organisations, significant for the region's economies severely affected by the pandemic, was recognised in the Conclusions of the Berlin Process Summit which state that "inclusive regional cooperation was shown at its best."¹²

Other achievements of the Transport Community Secretariat so far include the preparation of four initial action plans to achieve the community's objectives. In October 2020, the governments of the Western Balkans welcomed all four action plans and their implementation is at an early stage.

The first action plan refers to roads and it "aims towards development of climate resilient, intelligent, and resource-efficient TEN-T road network in Western Balkans by incorporating green and smart elements in road investments. Our final aim is to stimulate innovative, low emission and fit for digital age road transport operations."¹³

The second Transport Facilitation Action Plan will further "strengthen regional cooperation. Creation of joint "one-stop-go" at internal and external border crossing points, coupled with better interaction of different transport modes along will enable smoother, more efficient, and less costly logistic chains."

The third Rail Action Plan provides "the basis for deeper integration with the EU rail market. A rail system which is safe, inclusive, reliable, environmentally and socially sustainable, and interconnected within the region and with EU is the overarching aim of the Transport Community."

And the fourth Road Safety Action plan "promotes safety management, safer infrastructure, and protection of road users. Its actions strive to support the "zero deaths" objective, and to encourage regional best practice examples. Transport Community's aim is to ensure that transport systems, no matter how they are configured, are safe, sustainable, and equitable."

The European Commission has prepared an Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans of 20 billion euros for the period from 2021 to 2027.¹⁴ It is expected that this money will attract other investments totalling up to 20 billion euros. A significant portion of this money will be spent on infrastructure projects and is in line with some of the measures from the Transport Community action plans.

The aforementioned shows that Transport Community has become one of the most important instruments available to institutions in BiH, which can help harmonise BiH laws and standards with those in the EU. The Transport Community Secretariat plans to continuously provide professional and technical assistance to institutions in adopting very complex and demanding EU standards and laws. In addition, the mentioned EU funds for the construction and modernisation of road and railway infrastructure will be available. To what extent will BiH and other countries in the region make use of all this depends, of course, on the vision in BiH and the region, and the willingness to work on specific projects.

9 Dnevno.ba, "Potpisan sporazum o Transportnoj zajednici Zapadnog Balkana, ali bez BiH koja tako ostaje bez pola milijarde eura" [Transport Community Treaty of the Western Balkans signed, but without BiH which thus lost half a billion euros], 13 July 2017. <https://www.dnevno.ba/vijesti/potpisan-sporazum-o-transportnoj-zajednici-zapadnog-balkana-ali-bez-bih-koja-tako-ostaje-bez-pola-milijarde-eura-96871/>

10 Klix, "BiH danas zvanično pristupa Transportnoj zajednici, Zvizdić u Briselu potpisuje ugovor" [Today, BiH officially joins the Transport Community, Zvizdić signs the Treaty in Brussels], 18 September 2017. <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/bih-danas-zvanično-pristupa-transportnoj-zajednici-zvizdic-u-briselu-potpisuje-ugovor/170918019>

11 European Western Balkans, "Trgovina u doba pandemije: Kako su "Zeleni koridori" čuvali privrede Zapadnog Balkana" [Trade in the times of the pandemic: How Green Corridors protected the economies of the Western Balkans], 10 September 2020. <https://europeanwesternbalkans.rs/trgovina-u-doba-pandemije-kako-su-zeleni-koridori-cuvali-privrede-zapadnog-balkana/>

12 The Berlin Process Summit in Sofia, "Chair's Conclusions", 10 November 2020. https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Chairs-Conclusions_Sofia-2020.pdf

13 Transport Community, "Actions Plans endorsed by Transport Ministers of the Western Balkans", October 2020. <https://www.transport-community.org/action-plans/>

14 European Commission, "Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans", October 2020. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/factsheet-economic-and-investment-plan-2020.pdf>

3.

NEXT STOP TUZLA CANTON

In the previous ten years, about 32,000 traffic accidents have been registered on the roads of Tuzla Canton, in which close to 16,000 people suffered minor injuries and 2,000 were seriously injured. In the same period, 361 people lost their lives.¹⁵ For comparison's sake, three times as many traffic accidents were registered in Sarajevo Canton. However, there were as many as 40 percent fewer people with minor and 20 percent fewer people with serious injuries. Also, in Sarajevo Canton, half as many people lost their lives on the roads.

Experts explain this difference in traffic safety in two cantons with similar population numbers in different ways. The total number of traffic accidents in Sarajevo Canton is three times higher because a higher number of motor vehicles drive on the roads. Namely, 21 percent more motor vehicles were registered in the Sarajevo area than in Tuzla Canton.¹⁶ Furthermore, in Sarajevo, the population density is twice as high as in Tuzla Canton. This contributes not only to more accidents, but also to fewer opportunities for speeding and fewer accidents with injuries or death. In addition, older cars are associated with more severe consequences of accidents. While in the area of Sarajevo there are four out of ten registered motor vehicles older than 15 years, in Tuzla Canton there are as many as six out of ten vehicles older than 15 years.

Another reason why Sarajevo Canton has fewer injuries and deaths experts see in the fact that the road infrastructure in Tuzla Canton is less developed.

There is not a single kilometre of highway or motorway in Tuzla Canton. Therefore, the traffic in the canton takes place on 230 kilometres of main roads, 320 kilometres of regional roads and 1,450 kilometres of local and other roads.

In a 2019 report, Tuzla Canton Government stated that "many of the regional roads do not meet the criteria

prescribed for regional roads in terms of road width, type of road construction, driving dynamics characteristics, traffic signalisation, facilities, etc. Current state of regional roads in Tuzla Canton is not at a satisfactory level, most of the sections need comprehensive reconstruction, some sections need rehabilitation and the like."¹⁷ All this, of course, makes the roads in this canton more unsafe.

In April 2021, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced the beginning of the construction of the Tuzla-Brčko-Orašje highway for next year, but also the modernisation of the main road connecting Tuzla with Sarajevo.¹⁸ A month earlier, in March 2021, the Presidency of BiH and the President of the Republic of Turkey signed an Agreement on the construction of the Sarajevo-Belgrade highway.¹⁹ Part of the highway route should also go through Tuzla Canton. Whether, when and how soon highways and the modernisation of highways and regional roads will start and be completed depends on the speed and commitment to project development and the availability of funding.

Unlike frequent and public talks and plans to build highways and modernise roads, the fact that there is a 187-kilometre-long railway network in Tuzla Canton is currently being forgotten.²⁰ The first passenger train in Tuzla arrived in 1886 and today the railway lines Zvornik-Tuzla-Doboj and Brčko-Srebrenik-Tuzla-Živinice-Banovići connect almost all

¹⁵ Bihamk, "Informacija o saobraćajnim nezgodama, njihovim uzrocima i posljedicama u BiH u 2020. godini" [Information on traffic accidents in BiH in 2020, their causes and consequences], March 2021. https://bihamk.ba/assets/upload/Informacija_o_saobra%C4%87ajnim_nezgo.pdf

¹⁶ Institute of Statistics of the Federation of BiH, "Kantoni u brojkama" [Cantons in Numbers], 2021. <http://fzs.ba/index.php/2016/09/29/kantoni-u-brojkama/>

¹⁷ Tuzla Canton Government, "Izveštaj o implementaciji Strategije razvoja Tuzlanskog kantona 2016.-2020. godina za 2019. godinu" [2019 Report on the Implementation of the Tuzla Canton 2016-2020 Development Strategy], September 2020. http://www.vladatk.kim.ba/Ministarstva/MP/2020/SR/Strategija_razvoja_2019.pdf

¹⁸ Klix, "Tuzlanski kanton nema ni centimetar brze ceste ili autoputa, a najviše izdvaja za njihovu izgradnju" [Tuzla Canton does not have a centimetre of motorway or highway, and it spends the most on their construction], 10 April 2021. <https://www.klix.ba/biznis/tuzlanski-kanton-nema-ni-centimetar-brze-cesta-ili-autoputa-a-najvise-izdvaja-za-njihovu-izgradnju/210410036>

¹⁹ Radio Slobodna Evropa, "Predsjedništvo BiH potpisalo u Ankari Sporazum o autoputu Sarajevo-Beograd" [The Presidency of BiH signed the Agreement on the Sarajevo-Belgrade Highway in Ankara], 16 March 2021. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/31154113.html>

²⁰ Tuzla Canton Government, "Izveštaj o implementaciji Strategije razvoja Tuzlanskog kantona 2016.-2020. godina za 2019. godinu" [2019 Report on the Implementation of the Tuzla Canton 2016-2020 Development Strategy], September 2020. http://www.vladatk.kim.ba/Ministarstva/MP/2020/SR/Strategija_razvoja_2019.pdf

municipalities in Tuzla Canton, and provide connection to all major cities and capitals of two neighbouring countries, one of which, the Republic of Croatia, is an EU member.

However, since December 2019 there is no rail passenger traffic in Tuzla Canton; rail is only used for transport of goods. First, in December 2012, the passenger train Tuzla-Srebrenik-Brčko was abolished.²¹ Then, in December 2019, the passenger train Tuzla-Doboj was abolished.²² After 133 years, the transport of passengers by rail stopped, and almost two years later, there are no serious plans to re-establish it.

There are several reasons for abolishing these train lines – from insufficient number of passengers to the fact that a part of the railway is old and out of date. At the heart of all these reasons, however, is the lack of a clear vision, plan and investment in passenger railway. In January 2020, an informal group of citizens Friends of the Tuzla Railway wrote:

“Even with the existing conditions and state of the railway, the passenger train will cross the Lukavac-Tuzla route in about 20 minutes. With minimal effort and setting an appropriate schedule, a passenger train on this route would attract hundreds of new passengers, who would travel by train in a more comfortable, safer, cheaper way, plus a way that is more environmentally friendly. With significant investments in the rehabilitation and electrification of this line, the train would cross this route in about 15 minutes.”²³

Semir Hadžimusić, a historian from Tuzla and a member of this informal group, further explained:

“Rail passenger transport here, in the 21st century, has not been given a chance to succeed. On some routes it has not even been rebuilt, on those where it has it has been set up so that it fails. Passengers on the trains could not get to work or school. At the same time, bus traffic increased, so that in December 2019, we had 106 bus departures and six train departures daily between Lukavac and Tuzla.”²⁴

²¹ Railways of the Federation of BiH, “Saopćenje za javnost povodom ukidanja putničkih linija Bihac-Bosanski Novi i Tuzla –Brčko” [Press release on the abolishment of passenger lines Bihac-Bosanski Novi and Tuzla-Brčko], 1 December 2012. <https://www.zfbh.ba/saopcenje-za-javnost-povodom-ukidanja-putnickih-linija-bihac-bosanski-novi-i-tuzla-brcko/>

²² Klix, “Kroz Tuzlu putnički vozovi više ne prolaze, prekinuta je stogodišnja tradicija” [Passenger trains no longer pass through Tuzla, a hundred-year-old tradition has been broken], 15 December 2019. <https://www.klix.ba/biznis/kroz-tuzlu-putnicki-vozovi-vise-ne-prolaze-prekinuta-je-stogodisnja-tradicija/191215037>

²³ RTV Slon, “Prijatelji željeznice Tuzla pozvali nadležne da uspostave željeznički saobraćaj u TK” [Friends of the Tuzla Railway called on the authorities to establish railway traffic in Tuzla Canton], 31 January 2020. <https://www.rtvslon.ba/prijatelji-zeljeznice-tuzla-pozvali-nadlezne-da-uspostave-zeljeznicki-saobračaj-u-tk/>

²⁴ Klix, “Kroz Tuzlu putnički vozovi više ne prolaze, prekinuta je stogodišnja tradicija” [Passenger trains no longer pass through Tuzla, a hundred-year-old tradition has been broken], 15 December 2019. <https://www.klix.ba/biznis/kroz-tuzlu-putnicki-vozovi-vise-ne-prolaze-prekinuta-je-stogodisnja-tradicija/191215037>

In addition to the buses, on average about 12,000 vehicles pass daily on the Lukavac-Tuzla route.²⁵ Thanks to detailed measurements of the FBiH Public Enterprise “Ceste”, it is possible to determine in which periods of the year, on which days and at which time during the day they travel the most. A share of the passengers that travel by car could, with smart planning, be transported by rail.

Of course, with a broader vision, plan and investment, passenger transport by rail could become an attractive option along both existing lines in Tuzla Canton and beyond. According to the 2013 census, close to more than half a million inhabitants gravitated to them. With the announced construction of the Banovići-Vareš railway, which would connect Tuzla and Sarajevo, the potential is even greater.²⁶ Also, if the idea of building the Brčko-Bijeljina railway is implemented, the railway network in north-eastern BiH would connect nearly a million inhabitants and currently the most productive economic area in BiH.

More than half of the total transported goods in BiH are loaded and transported by rail in Tuzla Canton. Tuzla Canton’s share in BiH export is over 15 percent, higher than that of Sarajevo Canton. Nedret Kikanović, President of the Tuzla Canton Chamber of Commerce, stated that for the canton’s economy 187 kilometres of railway is “significant communication that we need and cannot do without.”²⁷ Namely, as much as seventy percent of goods in Tuzla Canton are transported by rail. For that reason, the modernisation of Tuzla Canton railway network is included in the BiH Transport Strategy until 2030.²⁸

With the improvement of legislation, its faster harmonisation with EU standards, investment in the construction of highways and modernisation of existing roads, and turning to passenger transport by rail, roads in Tuzla Canton and beyond, would become safer. All this, of course, is not in the exclusive competence of the Government of Tuzla Canton and cooperation with higher levels of government is crucial. But, as always, the first step is to set a clear vision.

For all levels of government, the Transport Community, with the EU financial support, can serve as an important and concrete instrument of support in developing such a vision, preparing the plans and implementing them.

²⁵ JP Ceste Federacije, “Brojanje saobraćaja 2018.” [Traffic Counting 2018], 2019. <https://jpdcfbh.ba/bs/poslovanje/publikacije>

²⁶ Klix, “Započet dogovor o izgradnji željezničke pruge Vareš - Banovići - Živinice” [Talks start on the construction of the Vareš - Banovići - Živinice railway], 6 May 2021. <https://www.klix.ba/biznis/zapocet-dogovor-o-izgradnji-zeljeznicke-pruge-varesh-banovici-zivinice/210506079>

²⁷ Klix, “Kroz Tuzlu putnički vozovi više ne prolaze, prekinuta je stogodišnja tradicija” [Passenger trains no longer pass through Tuzla, a hundred-year-old tradition has been broken], 15 December 2019. <https://www.klix.ba/biznis/kroz-tuzlu-putnicki-vozovi-vise-ne-prolaze-prekinuta-je-stogodisnja-tradicija/191215037>

²⁸ Vijeće ministara BiH, “Odluka o usvajanju Okvirne strategije prometa Bosne i Hercegovine za period 2016.-2030. godine” [Decision on the adoption of the 2016-2030 Framework Transport Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina], 14 July 2016. <http://www.sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/RGOK3hg2nhA=>

Pressure from Tuzla Canton and the wider region, as well as the vision, however, must come from Tuzla. It must come from the government and institutions, and the economy that benefits from the existing network as well, but also from the non-governmental sector. This should primarily include associations such as the Friends of the Tuzla Railway, but also various environmental associations in the canton. If implemented, such actions can serve as an example to others in BiH and the region.

4.

CONCLUSIONS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Tuzla Canton is an area in BiH where road and railway infrastructure, compared to some other parts of BiH and the EU, is neglected, and that is one of the reasons why more people in Tuzla Canton get injured or lose their lives in traffic accidents.

At the same time, the infrastructure has some basis for modernisation and upgrading. There exists a railway network, which is intensively used for transport of goods, as well as plans for the construction of expressway, highway and the modernisation of the most important main roads.

Also, Tuzla Canton as the most populous in BiH, with an economy that accounts for 15 percent of BiH exports, of which 90 percent to the EU, and which has been growing steadily in the last decade, together with municipalities in the immediate vicinity, from Doboje, Brčko and Orašje to Bijeljina and Zvornik, is an area of nearly a million inhabitants which, with smart planning, can become the engine of economic and social development of BiH.

However, the potential of Tuzla Canton must not be taken lightly. Since 2015, natural increase in Tuzla Canton has been negative, i.e., more people die than are born. Also, in just the last five years, the number of students in primary schools has decreased by almost 3,000 or 8 percent.

The vision, plan and investments in the development of road and railway traffic in the next five to ten years could be one of the important ways to reverse these negative trends, but also to use the potential to improve the daily lives of citizens in Tuzla Canton and BiH.

The Transport Community of the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans, of which BiH is a part, covers road, rail, inland waterway and maritime transport. The Community's objective is to extend the rules, principles and policies of the EU transport market to the countries of the Western Balkans.

The Community Secretariat will provide technical support in the process of transposing EU legislation and standards. The EU, in coordination with the Transport Community, will invest 9 billion euros in the Western Balkans through its economic and investment plan by 2027 and is expected to attract up to 20 billion euros in investments from other sources.

All levels of government in BiH should understand and utilise this opportunity to adopt EU standards and develop their road, rail, maritime and river infrastructure and, in the process, save lives, create conditions for new jobs, and improve the daily lives of BiH residents.

The following four recommendations emerge from the analysis.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The BiH Ministry of Transport and Communications, together with the competent entity and cantonal institutions, should continuously work on the implementation of all action plans of the Transport Community, and understand them as an instrument that will help BiH achieve a safer and more developed transport network.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The BiH Ministry of Transport and Communications, together with the competent entity and cantonal institutions, but also with the BiH Railways Public Corporation, Railways of the Federation of BiH and Railways of the Republika Srpska, should start the process of contemplating the future of railways in BiH this year, and develop a concrete strategy and action plan thereon.²⁹

RECOMMENDATION 3

In this year, Tuzla Canton Government could start the process of drafting strategic documents for the development of railway transport, with special emphasis on the development of passenger railway transport. In addition to the modernisation and electrification of the railway, the focus should be on the strategic expansion of the railway network, which should be closer to the citizens and the economy.

²⁹ The World Bank document taken as a basis: "BiH – Railways Policy Note: The status of the railway sector and policy options for improving its effectiveness while harmonizing with European Union requirements", 2016. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25760/110653-WP-P156961-PUBLIC-BiHRailwaysPolicyNoteEng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

RECOMMENDATION 4

Tuzla Canton Government, with the support of the Transport Community and the EU, could develop and implement a pilot project for passenger transport by rail between Tuzla and Lukavac in early 2022. With minimal investment and setting the appropriate schedule, passenger trains on this route could attract sufficient passengers, popularise rail transport in Tuzla Canton and serve as basis for further development of passenger rail transport.

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

European Integration and Economic Development



There are both reasons and space for the development and modernisation of highways and railway traffic in BiH, as well as for a significant increase in the number of rail passengers. This will, of course, require vision, projects and investments.



The Transport Community, with EU financial support, can serve as an important and concrete instrument of support in the development of this vision, project design and implementation.

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