

## [SOUTH ADRIATIC CONNECTIVITY GOVERNANCE – SAGOV](#)

### Press Release

Podgorica, January 25, 2019



South Adriatic Area is an important transit area between Italy, Albania and Montenegro. However, its place in the European Connectivity Agenda is under-represented. When one factors in the trade volume it can be noticed that maritime transport carries 75% of Albanian foreign trade, while Italy is its main trade partner (63,6% of exports and 43,7% of imports) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> FDI source for the country. Montenegro is investing more than EUR 800 MiO to connect Bar port with TEN-T Orient – East Med and so become the nearest – and main port in the Adriatic Sea – for Serbian companies.

Recently two major developments are taking place in the area: the Adriatic – Ionian Corridor and sizeable investment in radically improving Durres Port infrastructure. Meanwhile, smaller but very relevant achievements have been reached. Tuzi Rail station serves both Montenegro – Albanian railways, Hani i Hotit Border Crossing Point has undergone restructuring to shorten border-crossing time, etc. Both ports, Bar and Durres figure as entry point for the Corridor VIII in the Balkans.

Moreover, both Albania and Montenegro have adopted their Transport Sector Strategy, where the development of connections with border countries are an important part. However, more coordination amongst national authorities when preparing those documents is needed, notwithstanding the role and contribution of regional structures such as SEETO or WBIF. Moreover this kind of regional coordination platforms does not exist at all with Italy.

On the other side of Adriatic, Puglia ports of Bari and Taranto are both part of TEN-T corridor Scandinavian – Mediterranean. The prioritization of investment in transport depends also on the importance of the destination nod i.e. its market size and / or its connections to 3<sup>rd</sup> markets and networks. From this point of view, port of Bari is the closest point of access to the EU market for both Albania and Montenegro. Moreover, lately Bari port is offering feeder service for exports from the Balkans destined to far away destinations starting from Africa and further away. Port of Bari serves perfectly freight, large cargo and long distance, and containers.

As each economic activity has its own kind of connectivity, manufacturing needs roads and railways, while the bulk transport needs rail and maritime. The economic structure of both Balkan countries and their trade profile favorites the maritime transport.

With the developments in the Maritime Silk Road and the exponential growth of Piraeus port, the triangle Bari – Durres – Bar can profit to become a pit-stop and an entry gate either for the Apennine peninsula or for the Balkans peninsula. Their geographic position and proximity makes them perfect for short sea-shipping, mostly *cabotage* and feeder services serving the Motorways of the Sea ending north in Trieste.

The security of navigation is the main condition for trade to develop. In this angle, the project SAGOV is supporting joint work between Albanian Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy and Montenegrin Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs to speed up the implementation of VTMS in Albania, the only country in Adriatic that does not have this system.

In the end, the project SAGOV is designed to use the best cases of current cooperation across Adriatic, and develop and promote them in the Connectivity Agenda. It will also bring together policy-makers and other connectivity stakeholders from Western Balkans with the respective EU cohesion and territorial authorities in Italy to promote connectivity networks in the South Adriatic area.

These were some of the initial findings of the on-going research that were presented during the Thematic Round-Table SAGOV project organized in Podgorica on January 25. Representatives of transport connectivity institutions, academia, civil society organizations and different embassies accredited in Montenegro discussed with project partners on the latest developments in connectivity dynamics and EU support to transport projects in the partner countries.

A day earlier, on January 24, project partners gathered to discuss on the progress of the activities, the administrative and financial aspects and further steps ahead in the project implementation.

“South Adriatic Connectivity Governance – SAGOV” is funded by Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme and is implemented by Cooperation and Development Institute (Lead Partner) in partnership with the Albanian Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, Montenegrin Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs, Region of Puglia, and European Movement in Montenegro. Project Associated partners are Albanian Ministry of Finance and Economy and Italian Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport — Coast Guard Headquarters.

The project duration is 24 months, from April 2018 to March 2020.