

Launching Event

“CONNECTED FOR COHESION”

15th September 2025 | 14.30hrs – 17.00hrs | Xheko Imperial and Online

The recent inclusion of the Western Balkans in the Core Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), together with the adoption of the EU Growth Plan for the region, marks the next step in the EU’s approach to enlargement and connectivity. Yet, the South Adriatic Area (SAA) continues to face structural challenges that hamper its integration, especially on its Eastern shores: underdeveloped rail infrastructure, fragmented institutional coordination, and limited capacity to engage with EU funding and policy processes.

The Co4Co – Connected for Cohesion project aims to enhance TEN-T access readiness of South Adriatic region and increasing its footprint in EU policy making in transport sector. Financed by the Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme 2021–2027, the project will provide a regional assessment of rail connectivity gaps, and a pilot knowledge-transfer programme tailored to EU transport policies and instruments. Project partners will also jointly work to joint strategic recommendations to better position the South Adriatic region in the upcoming MFF 2028–2034, particularly in the rail connectivity sector.

Co4Co is implemented by a cross-border partnership of five institutions: Cooperation and Development Institute (Albania) as Lead Partner, Albanian Railways, Railway Infrastructure of Montenegro, Puglia Region and Molise Region from Italy.

This Launching Event is a Side Event of the Tirana Connectivity Forum 2025 and will convene key stakeholders — policy-makers, infrastructure managers, and regional actors— to initiate a supportive dialogue and lay the foundation for a stronger South Adriatic contribution to Europe’s future connectivity agenda.

AGENDA

14.30hrs – 15.00hrs Registration and Coffee

15.00hrs – 15.30hrs Welcome remarks

- Mr. Ardian Hackaj, Coordinator of Tirana Connectivity Forum, CDI
- Mr. Pavle Karanikić, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of Montenegro in Albania

15.30hrs – 15.50hrs Preparing the railway sector for 2030 Membership: Reforms and Investments

- Ms. Enkelejda Muçaj, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania
- Ms. Eridana Çano, General Director, State Agency of Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination

15.50hrs – 16.40hrs Co4Co contribution to rail sector preparedness in South Adriatic Area

- Ms. Barbara Valenzano, Special Structure Monitoring National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Puglia Region (*online*)
- Ms. Marina Bošković, Railway Infrastructure of Montenegro
- Mr. Ergys Verdho, Albanian Railways
- Mr. Antonio Cardillo, Civil Protection Service, Molise Region

Open discussion

16.40hrs – 16.55hrs EU and Adriatic-Ionian Macro Region (EUSAIR) dimension

- Mr. Gilles Kittel, Team Leader, Instrument for Pre-Accession, Enlargement Negotiations and EUSAIR, DG Regio, European Commission (*online*)
- Mr. Dejan Lasica, Rail Policy Coordinator, Permanent Secretariat, Transport Community (*online*)

16.55hrs - 17.00hrs Conclusions: preparing for the 2030 membership target date

- Ms. Zana Guzja (Josa), Director, Directorate of Transport and Infrastructure Development Policies and Strategies, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania

17.00hrs Cocktail Reception

Moderator of the event: Mr. Kreshnik Kucaj, Director of Information, Scan TV

Participation is upon invitation only. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in Italian and English.