

## CONCEPT NOTE

### CORRIDOR 8 – EAST GATE: PROMOTING FLAGSHIP 1 “CONNECTING EAST TO WEST”

**Better and profound - connections between EU member states and candidate countries as a basic systemic factor for growth and resilient democratic institutions in Southeast Europe**

**Date: 19 May, 2021 | Time: 09.30-11.00 (CET) | Venue: Zoom Platform**

#### Background

Before the 2020 Sofia Summit, the European Commission published the “*Economic and Investment plan for the Western Balkans*” (EIP). The plan contains guidelines on good governance as the foundation for sustainable economic growth, and offers an investment package that combines grants up to EUR 9 bn with matching loans up to 20 bn.

The EIP promotes investments in sustainable transport, in clean energy, in the environment and climate, in digital future, in boosting the private sector, and investing in human capital, in the framework of Regional economic integration and integration with EU. The EIP contains a list of 10 investments flagships in the region. The Commission engaged to examine their prioritization, costs, benefits and the impact of selected projects with a view to taking them forward actively and expediently.

In the area of transport, the first one investment flagship considered to be completed or advanced by the end of this Commission’s mandate is “Connecting East to West”, consisting in a portion of Rail Corridor VIII between Skopje and the Bulgarian border.

In the beginning of 2021, North Macedonia Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani addressed a letter to the Foreign Ministers of Bulgaria Zaharieva, and of Albania Xhaçka. He proposed a new multidisciplinary initiative based on an upgrade of Corridor 8. Calling it, Initiative 8, Mr. Osmani proposes to intensify tri-lateral cooperation so as to “...*speed up infrastructure, energy, and communication investment projects along the route of Corridor VIII. This would serve as the foundation for a political platform that will provide an additional forum to promote mutual cooperation, the intensification of political, economic, security, cultural and social exchange, that will undoubtedly result in increasing trust between the peoples*”.

This roundtable aims to promote regional cooperation as based on multilayered & multi-actor connectivity and provide a technical platform where stakeholders from three countries and EU Commission will set the ground for the: i) next steps in the development for the Flagship 1, and other projects / Flagships, and; ii) its synergies with the Initiative 8.

## AGENDA

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**09.30-09.40 WELCOME NOTE:**

**Dr. Klaus Fiesinger**, Regional Director for Southeast Europe of Hanns-Seidel-Foundation

**09.40 – 09.50 BULGARIA AS THE EAST GATE OF CORRIDOR 8:**

**Yasen Georgiev**, Executive Director of Economic Policy Institute in Sofia

**09.50 – 10.00 SOA OF CORRIDOR 8:**

**Alain Baron**, Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), European Commission

**10.00 - 10.45 PANEL DISCUSSION:**

- **Tonka Yancheva**, State Expert of the National Transport Policy Directorate of the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, Bulgaria
- **Dr. Hari Lokvenec**, Director, Railways of Republic of North Macedonia – Skopje
- **Elona Ajazi**, Director General of National Development Projects Unit at Prime Minister's Office in Albania

**Moderator: Ardian Hackaj**, Director of Research, Cooperation & Development Institute in Tirana

**10.45 -11.00 CONCLUSIONS:**

**Yasen Georgiev**, Executive Director of Economic Policy Institute in Sofia

*\*The working language of this event will be English.*