

12th EU-Albania Subcommittee meeting on Transport, Energy, Environment and Regional Development

The 12th Subcommittee meeting on Transport, Energy, Environment and regional development between the EU and Albania took place on 30 September 2021 via videoconference. Representatives from the European Commission (Commission) discussed with Albanian authorities the most recent developments in these areas. The meeting was co-chaired for the EU by Mr Detlev Boeing, SAA coordinator and connectivity desk for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Directorate General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, and by Mr. Ilir Bejtja, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Energy for Albania.

The Commission welcomed the progress achieved by Albania in areas related to the **Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity**, in particular through revised transport planning and energy connectivity, and encouraged the country to accelerate the necessary reforms and implementation of strategies and *acquis* alignment. In all areas, the Commission stressed the need to ensure coherence with the priorities of the European Green Deal as specified by the Green Agenda.

The **Economic and Investment Plan** for the Western Balkans foresees for the years to come substantial infrastructure investments in Albania, such as on gas networks, railways and roads. In order to be able to benefit from it, Albania needs to improve its investment planning and implementation capacity.

On **transport**, the Commission welcomed the participation of Albania in the activities of the Transport Community and the endorsement of the Action Plans with detailed steps to improve in particular road safety, railways, waterborne and multimodal transport. Work advanced on extending the Green Lanes/Corridors with EU Member States. Legislation has been adopted for setting up the rail agency. Albania needs to continue legislative alignment and step up efforts to improve the quality of vessels under Albanian flag.

In the **energy** sector, Albania needs to accelerate the liberalisation of its electricity market and finalise the establishment of its power exchange to ensure its integration with neighbouring countries. The country should proceed with adoption of energy efficiency legislation.

In the area of **environment and climate change**, the EC welcomed the decision of the Albanian government to place the environmental protection high on the political agenda. The progress made in the development of the waste and climate change policy framework was also acknowledged. Nevertheless, Albania still faces many challenges related to the implementation of the air, waste and water legislation. Better and more human and financial resources are needed to be able to respond to the implementation requirements in the waste and water sectors. Infrastructure investments in protected areas need to go through thorough environmental assessments and public consultations before the decision to implement them is taken. Albania also needs to prioritise the alignment and implementation of the EU climate *acquis* as well as the implementation of the Paris

Agreement. The 2019 earthquakes, the Covid-19 pandemic and the recent forest fires highlighted the urgent need for strengthening **civil protection** structures and systems.

The Commission noted that Albania is working on a reform of the **regional development** and will support it in this process.