

Interview by Amna Redzepagic-Colic, Regional Cooperation Council's Expert on Sustainable Growth (energy, environment, transport and competitiveness) to Bosnia and Herzegovina daily, *Dnevni avaz*

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## **Goal Is To Unite European Sky**

*The South East Europe 2020 strategy set extremely ambitious objectives for transport sector in general: reducing total transportation costs per unit of transport service by 20%, increase of transport infrastructure utilisation rate by 40%, higher energy efficiency by cutting energy consumption per unit of transport service by 20%*

Conference titled “Air Transport as a Driver for Development and Economic Prosperity in the South East Europe” will take place in Sarajevo today (22 May). In that regard, we talked to Amna Redzepagic-Colic, the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) expert on sustainable growth (energy, environment, transport and competitiveness).

### ***What do you expect from this conference?***

The conference aims to contribute to the current situation in air transport by analysing problems and challenges that all key participants in this field are facing, from state administration, national air carriers, and airports to end consumers – passengers. The conference will discuss improvement of the regional cooperation as a mechanism for achievement of visible progress in air transport, possibilities and contribution of air industry, economic development and options and criteria for establishing better connections between airports and individual cities in the region, taking into consideration the extremely poor connections that affect the level of comfort and travel speed, and the great regional airspace potential that has not been sufficiently or adequately utilised. This event will bring together eminent experts in air transport sector, i.e. representatives of state administration, airlines, airports and academia. I hope that this conference will offer some specific solutions and guidelines that will be fully implemented in practice, aiming at improvement of the the quality of the services delivered to the end consumer, which is our main goal.

***Our country has not assumed full control over its sky yet. Owing to the EU support, the BiH civil aviation regulator – BH DCA is functioning, but the Air Navigation Services Agency is still lagging behind. Can a progress in BiH air transport be expected in such circumstances?***

According to the information I have, referring to the European Commission's 2013 Progress Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, BiH made some progress in the implementation of the first stage of common European space, in accordance with the European Common Aviation Area Agreement (ECAAA). Although the national Air Navigation Services Agency adopted a Rulebook on Internal Organisation and Job Systematisation, the BiH Council of Ministers should approve additional documents required for finalisation of planned activities and functioning of the Agency, in order to enable aviation institutions in BiH to assume full responsibility for management of own airspace. There is the impression that activities in this field could develop at a faster pace and that BiH is lagging behind in that regard. However, in view of the complex social structure and available resources, relevant institutions put required efforts after all to enable this country to make the expected progress in this field.

***BiH ratified the Functional Airspace Block Central Europe (FAB CE) agreement. What does this concretely mean for BiH citizens?***

Yes, as you said, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of the so-called FAB CE, in a package with Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. The FAB CE Master Plan was approved in 2008 and it was defined in a legislative package, the so-called Single European Sky 2004, and further developed in the second legislative package (SES 2-2009). Bosnia and Herzegovina became the seventh and the last country to ratify the Functional Airspace Block Central Europe agreement, which came into force in 2013. Namely, given that FAB is the main tool for reducing the fragmentation of airspace, which is still based on national borders, thus decreasing the efficiency of airspace management, the goal is to unite the European sky and thereby help aviation become safer, cheaper, and air traffic flow become more effective, which should eventually impact citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well.

***What are the standards of the European Union in the air transport domain that BiH must meet in order to join the EU?***

Bosnia and Herzegovina signed and ratified the aforementioned European Common Aviation Area Agreement (ECAAA) and thereby, like other countries from the region, committed to its efficient and effective implementation. The Agreement defines norms and European standards that a country must meet in this field through two transitional stages before it becomes ready to join the EU. Harmonisation is required in access to market, air safety, security, air traffic management, environmental protection, social aspect and consumer protection, and in training of the necessary staff. Therefore, the goal of the Agreement is to ensure balanced application of high standards and rules in the above-mentioned fields.

***Which objectives of SEE 2020 strategy are linked with air transport improvement in BiH?***

The South East Europe 2020 strategy set extremely ambitious objectives for transport sector in general, to mention a few: reducing total transportation costs per unit of transport service by 20%, increase of transport infrastructure utilisation rate by 40%, higher energy efficiency by cutting energy consumption per unit of transport service by 20%. Air transport as one of the forms of transport will individually contribute to the aforementioned objectives through efficient implementation of the above-mentioned Single European Sky and of the Joint Service Provision Area Initiative, which was launched in 2013 under the auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council, aiming at achievement of key EU rules and guidelines in this field. Therefore, the focus is on objectives arising from the main legislative and institutional framework and the Single European Sky that I already talked about. When it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, I must say that individual national objectives, like for all countries in the region, will be defined through national plans for the implementation of SEE 2020 strategy that are under development.