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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
No. prev. doc.:	7646/20
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 08/2020: "EU investments in cultural sites: a topic that deserves more focus and coordination" - Decision to use the written procedure for adoption

1. On 23 April 2020, the General Secretariat of the Council received the Special Report No 08/2020 "EU investments in cultural sites: a topic that deserves more focus and coordination".
2. Pursuant to the rules laid down in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors¹, the Permanent Representatives Committee, at its meeting on 13 May 2020, instructed the Working Party on Structural Measures to examine this report according to the rules laid down in the above-mentioned conclusions.

¹ Doc. 7515/00 FIN 127 + COR 1.

3. The Working Party on Structural Measures examined the Special Report on 9 and 15 June 2020 and an agreement on draft Council conclusions was reached on 17 June 2020 following a silence procedure.
4. Given the current exceptional circumstances, in which no Council meetings are scheduled to take place, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to:
- confirm its agreement on the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 08/2020 entitled "EU investments in cultural sites: a topic that deserves more focus and coordination", as set out in the Annex to this document, and
 - to decide, in accordance with the first subparagraph of Article 12(1) of the Council's Rules of Procedure and Article 1 of Council Decision (EU) 2020/430, as extended by Council Decision (EU) 2020/556, that the Council uses the written procedure for the approval of the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 08/2020 entitled "EU investments in cultural sites: a topic that deserves more focus and coordination", as set out in the Annex to this document.
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DRAFT**Council conclusions on Special Report No 8/2020 by the European Court of Auditors:
EU investments in cultural sites: a topic that deserves more focus and coordination****THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:**

- (1) WELCOMES Special Report No 8/2020 by the European Court of Auditors (hereafter referred to as "the Court") and the Commission's observations to the Report.
- (2) NOTES that the Court's audit described in the Report examined various Union funds and instruments investing in culture, focusing on the effectiveness and sustainability of EU investments in cultural sites, funded under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and covered the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods, as well as the draft design of the post-2020 programming period.
- (3) TAKES NOTE of the findings of the Report, in particular that:
 - The strategic framework for EU action in culture is complex and partially reflected in EU funding;
 - The Commission has developed several initiatives that can promote cultural sites, but coordination with the EU funding arrangements is still limited;
 - The ERDF is a structuring and important instrument for some Member States' investments in cultural sites although such investments are not treated as a priority for the ERDF, whose primary objective is to reinforce economic, social and territorial cohesion;
 - The ERDF investments in cultural sites focused mostly on economic objectives and to a lesser extent on social and cultural ones;

- More attention should be given to the sustainability of cultural sites as the sustainability needs to be ensured at all phases of the project.
- (4) NOTES that the only EU fund designed solely for culture - the Creative Europe programme, is limited in terms of funding, whereas support for culture in other EU funds aims mainly at achieving other EU priorities and objectives, such as urban and regional development, enterprises and tourism.
- (5) STRESSES that the ERDF is the most significant source of EU funding for investments in cultural sites although spending on culture represents a small portion of the overall ERDF budget.
- (6) ACKNOWLEDGES the need to promote quality principles in projects related to culture;
- (7) CONSIDERS the Report as a useful contribution to reflections of the Commission and Member States on how to further improve their work on EU investments in cultural sites.
- (8) Broadly SHARES the observations of the Commission to the findings and recommendations included in the Court's Report, in particular that:
- The current strategic framework for culture, including strategic and operational objectives, should be improved;
 - In coordination with Member States, the Commission should explore the use of both public and private funding for safeguarding Europe's heritage sites;
 - The sustainability of cultural sites funded by various Union funds and instruments should be promoted;
 - More specific actions to preserve heritage sites should be taken when negotiating relevant operational programmes.
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