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'I' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee
No. prev. doc.:	ST 10132/23
Subject:	Coordination of the EU position in preparation for the 20th Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community (Belgrade, 27 June 2023) - Approval

1. On 6 June 2023, the Commission services provided an information note to the working party on “Transport – Intermodal Questions and Networks”¹ referring to the next meeting of the Regional Steering Committee (‘RSC’) of the EU-Western Balkans Transport Community, which will be organised on 27 June 2023 in Belgrade. The Transport Community’s Permanent Secretariat had circulated preparatory documents² for the meeting. The information note contained background information and draft Union positions in respect of the foreseen agenda items. The previous meeting of the Regional Steering Committee was held in Belgrade on 28 March 2023³.
2. The Commission representative presented the note to the working party on 12 June 2023, which was favourably received by delegations. One delegation underlined the importance of technical assistance, also for ensuring approximation of the three trio countries to the Transport Community, and offered its active participation in the RSC meeting regarding the

¹ Doc. ST 10132/23.

² See WK 6840/23.

³ Doc. ST 7183/23.

presentation of the Transport Observatory Data Information System. Another delegation showed particular interest in the study on the region's railway market and would like to submit comments before its conclusion.

3. The Presidency asked delegations for any further comments to the draft Union position in writing by 15 June 2023, suggesting that technical contributions to points for presentation could be made closer to the RSC meeting or on the spot. No further comments were made.
 4. In view of this, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to approve the draft Union position for the forthcoming meeting of the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community as set out in the annex to this note.
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**Coordination in preparation for the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport
Community on 27 June 2023⁴**

This annex note is based on the Commission services' information note ST 13132/23 of 6 June 2023 in view of providing information or coordinating EU positions for the upcoming Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community.

The Regional Steering Committee will cover the following areas of EU relevance:

- Information on the Connectivity Summit (held 15-16 May 2023, Budva) and follow-up;
- Information on the new generation of Action Plans on Road, Road Safety, Rail, Transport Facilitation, and Waterborne Transport and Multimodality for the period 2024-2027;
- Information on the preparation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Annual Report;
- Information from the European Commission on Safe and Sustainable Transport Programme;
- Draft Report on the Progress of the Study “*Assessment of the Rail Market in the Western Balkans in Terms of Capacities, Policies, Economic and Technical Level of Development of Freight and Passenger Transport Segments*”;
- Information on Cooperation with Observing Participants;
- Discussion on the detailed drafting of proposed changes to the Rules on Reimbursement of Expenses to Participants at the Meetings Organised by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat;
- Report from 6th Budget Committee meeting of Transport Community;/
- Mid-Year Report on the Transport Community Annual Work Programme 2023;

⁴ 09:30 – 13:00, Belgrade, Serbia, [TCT Headquarters. As in previous Regional Steering Committee meetings, the possibility of remote participation will be provided (online connection).

- Presentation of the Transport Community Audit Report for 2022;
- Transport Community Budget 2024 outline;
- Decision on the renewal of the mandates of the Director and Deputy Director of TCT Secretariat.

PART I – GENERAL

Article 24 of the Treaty establishing the Transport Community ('TCT')⁵ establishes the Regional Steering Committee. It is responsible for the administration of the TCT and for ensuring its proper implementation. For this purpose, it makes recommendations and takes decisions in the cases provided for in the TCT. Notably, the Regional Steering Committee:

- prepares the work of the Ministerial Council,
- decides on the establishment of technical committees,
- as regards newly adopted EU acts, takes appropriate action, notably through the revision of Annex I to the TCT,
- appoints the Director of the Secretariat after consulting the Ministerial Council,
- may appoint one or more Deputy Directors of the Secretariat,
- lays down rules of the Secretariat,
- may review, by way of a decision, the level of budget contributions, on request of any Contracting Party,
- adopts the annual budget of the Transport Community,
- adopts a decision specifying the procedure for the implementation of the budget, for presenting and auditing accounts and for inspection,
- takes decisions on disputes brought by the Contracting Parties,
- adopts general principles in the area of access to documents, in respect of documents held by bodies established by, or under, the TCT,
- adopts annual reports to the attention of the Ministerial Council on the implementation of the Comprehensive Network;
- in respect of certain Union acts, establishes time limits and ways for the transposition by the South East European Parties.

⁵ OJ L 278, 27.10.2017, p. 3

The Regional Steering Committee is composed of a representative, and an alternate representative, of each of the Contracting Parties. Participation as observers is open to all EU Member States.

The Regional Steering Committee acts by unanimity.



PART II – DETAILS

RSC Agenda part 1 (policy)

Agenda item 1

Information on the Connectivity Summit (held 15-16 May 2023, Budva) and follow-up

This is an information point from the TCT Secretariat on the Connectivity Summit, which took place on 15-16 May 2023 in Montenegro. The Summit was entitled “Linking EU and Western Balkans/CEFTA Parties: Sustainable Links-Stronger Economy” and was organised together with the CEFTA Secretariat. It brought the attention of the wider community of professionals and political stakeholders to issues related to sustainable and efficient trade, transport and logistics, as prerequisites for attracting investments and enhancing economic growth within the region of Western Balkans, as well as for strengthening relations between the region and the EU.

The summary prepared by the TCT Secretariat for this agenda point presents in further detail the proceedings of the Connectivity Summit, the main deliverables and expected follow-up actions.

Union position

- To thank the TCT Secretariat for the organisation, together with the CEFTA Secretariat, of the successful Connectivity Summit.

Agenda item 2

Information on the new generation of Action Plans on Road, Road Safety, Rail, Transport Facilitation, and Waterborne Transport and Multimodality for the period 2024-2027

This is an information point from the TCT Secretariat. The actions included in the current five TCT action plans (on road, road safety, rail, transport facilitation and waterborne transport and multimodality) are set to expire in 2024. In its short note accompanying this agenda point, the TCT Secretariat has included a proposed general approach to the new action plans to cover the period 2024-2027, as well as an estimated timeline for the process.

Union position

- To acknowledge the information presented by the TCT Secretariat, as well as any subsequent reactions from the Regional Partners.
- To underline the importance of fulfilling the commitments contained in annex I TCT.
- To invite the TCT Secretariat to come back with a more detailed proposal for the new generation action plans.

Agenda item 3

Information on the preparation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Annual Report

This is an information point from the TCT Secretariat. The Secretariat has prepared a short written input and will update the Members of the Regional Steering Committee on the intended approach for the 2023 Annual TEN-T Report, with data collection from the Regional Participants scheduled to begin in June 2023. The 2023 edition of the TEN-T Annual Report will be the first to benefit from the Transport Observatory Data Information System (TODIS) data analysis and reporting features. For this purpose, data collection will be managed entirely through the system.

Under Article 8 of the Treaty establishing the Transport Community, the Regional Steering Committee must report every year to the Ministerial Council on the implementation of the TEN-T. The first edition of the TEN-T Annual Report was approved by the Regional Steering Committee on 20 May 2021, and endorsed by the Ministerial Council on 5 July 2021. The 2022 edition of the report was approved by the RSC on 14 November 2022 and endorsed by the Ministerial Council on 15 November 2022. The 2023 TEN-T Annual Report is expected to build on the findings of previous years' editions and follow the same methodology.

Union position

- To take note of the information shared by the TCT Secretariat;
- To underline that the annual TEN-T report is an important deliverable for the development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core networks to the Western Balkans.

Agenda item 4

Demonstration of Transport Observatory Data Information System (TODIS) - live functionality by TCT Permanent Secretariat

The roll-out of the second phase of the Transport Observatory (the Transport Observatory Data Information System – TODIS) has been completed. During the RSC meeting, the TCT Secretariat will present its functionality to the Regional Partners.

Union position

- To acknowledge the presentation by the TCT Secretariat;
- To underline the significance of the Transport Observatory for important TCT deliverables, such as the annual TEN-T report and the bi-annual update of the five-year rolling work plan.

Agenda item 5

Information from the European Commission on Safe and Sustainable Transport Programme

This is an information point from the European Commission. During the RSC meeting of 28 March 2023, the Commission presented the latest state-of-play concerning the development of the Safe and Sustainable Transport Programme. During the RSC meeting of 27 June 2023, the Commission will present the latest developments since the end of March 2023.

Agenda item 6

Draft Report on the Progress of the Study “*Assessment of the Rail Market in the Western Balkans in Terms of Capacities, Policies, Economic and Technical Level of Development of Freight and Passenger Transport Segments*”

This is an information point from the TCT Secretariat, which will present the draft report of an ongoing study on the rail market situation in the Western Balkans. As part of the efforts to deliver on the TCT rail action plan, the study aims to deliver a comprehensive overview of the transportation needs, traffic flows, and market situation in the Western Balkans by assessment of

the capacities, economic and technical level of development of freight and passenger transport in the region.

The study is focused on two main tasks: to prepare a structure and data collection form for the creation and delivery of a report on Western Balkan Rail Market Monitoring as per Regulation (EU) 2015/1100 for 2021 as a baseline year; as well as to update the Preliminary Implementation plan, the Transport Market Study, the Inventory of Rail Freight Facilities and the annexes done in 2017 taking into consideration the latest updates and changes of strategies and data related to rail transport in the EU and the Western Balkans. The final report is expected later in 2023.

Union position

- To acknowledge the information presented by the TCT Secretariat.

Agenda item 7

Information on Cooperation with Observing Participants

This is an information point from the TCT Secretariat, which will report on the state-of-play of the closer involvement of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the work of the Transport Community.

Much progress has been achieved in the last six months since the endorsement of the joint statement on the closer cooperation with the Trio. The TCT Secretariat has engaged the observing participants at various levels, introduced the work of the Transport Community, delivered on their involvement in the work of the TCT technical committees and kick-started work on incorporating the Trio in some of the major TCT deliverables, such as the action plans. As part of the engagement, a dedicated high-level session with the observing participants was organised during the Connectivity Summit in Montenegro, as well as study visits to the TCT Secretariat Headquarters to discuss priorities for the upcoming period.

As part of the continued engagement of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to the work of the Transport Community, further steps are foreseen by the European Commission, including the preparation of a dedicated regional programme to deliver on additional aspects of the closer involvement, such as the provision of dedicated technical assistance to the observing participants.

In the margins of the Connectivity Summit in Budva, Montenegro, the European Commission held bilateral exchanges with the six Western Balkan Partners on the closer involvement of the Trio to

the work of the Transport Community, in which general support for the eventual full membership of the observing participant was shared by those Regional Partners in a position to give an indication at this informal stage of the process. The Commission undertook to build on these exchanges after consulting the EU Member States. In this regard, the Commission intends to come back soon to the EU Member States for a discussion on the next steps towards full membership for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the TCT.

Union position

- To thank the TCT Secretariat for its efforts to deliver on the closer involvement of the observing participants in the work of the Transport Community.
- To encourage the observing participants to make full use of the opportunities for closer cooperation with the Transport Community currently available.
- To underline the importance of discussing the next steps towards full membership in the TCT for the observing participants.

RSC Agenda part 2 (administration)

Agenda item 8

Discussion on the detailed drafting of proposed changes to the Rules on Reimbursement of Expenses to Participants at the Meetings Organised by the TCT Secretariat

As presented during the Intermodal Working Party meeting of 24 February 2023, some of the Regional Partners have previously underlined difficulties to participate in different TCT events and official meetings due to government restrictions on travel costs. This has in many instances resulted in the inability to ensure physical presence in meetings. In addition, it has also led to significant additional administrative burden for the TCT Secretariat, with the majority of Regional Partners participating in events requesting exception and prepayment of participation, resulting in travel and accommodation being prearranged by the TCT Secretariat.

Following the discussion during the RSC meeting of 28 March 2023, the TCT Secretariat has prepared a detailed proposal of changes to the currently applicable TCT reimbursement rules. These include a proposal to increase the number of supported participants per delegating institution from one to two for certain events focused on capacity building, as well as the harmonisation of rules applicable to external experts and Regional Partners participants, including the introduction of a daily subsistence allowance equivalent to the one applicable to TCT staff.

In case consensus in principle will be reached during the RSC meeting of 27 June 2023, the Commission is expected to submit to Council a proposal under article 218(9) TFEU.

Union position

- To repeat its position that potential increase in reimbursement costs stemming from the increase in the number of maximum participants should be subject to funds availability within the already agreed budgetary framework.
- To state support in principle for proposed changes to the TCT reimbursement rules, which would allow to overcome difficulties in participating in TCT events and official meetings.
- To acknowledge the reactions of the Regional Partners.

Agenda item 9

Report from the 6th Budget Committee meeting of Transport Community

This is an information point from the Chair of the TCT Budget Committee. The RSC meeting of 20 May 2021 requested for each applicable meeting to have a separate agenda point regarding the conclusions of the Budget Committee meetings. The Chair of the Budget Committee will therefore present the discussions that took place during the 6th Budget Committee meeting on 19 April 2023.

Union position

- To acknowledge the information presented by the Chair of the TCT Budget Committee.

Agenda item 10

Mid-Year Report on the Transport Community Annual Work Programme 2023

In line with the reporting requirements applicable to the Transport Community, the Secretariat prepared the Mid-Year Report on the activities under the Annual Work Programme 2023, outlining key actions and achievements in the first half of 2023, focusing on sustainable and efficient transport and logistics, as prerequisites for investments and economic development. The Annual Work Programme 2023 foresaw the organisation of a Connectivity Summit on “Linking EU and Western Balkans/CEFTA Parties: Sustainable Links-Stronger Economy”. The Summit was co-organised with the CEFTA Secretariat and took place on 15-16 May in Budva, Montenegro (see separate agenda point).

Union position

- To take note of the presentation and of possible interventions from the Western Balkan partners on the ongoing implementation of the Annual Work Programme 2023.

Agenda item 11

Presentation of the Transport Community Audit Report for 2022

This is an information point by the TCT Secretariat. The final Transport Community Audit Report for 2022 should be provided by the auditor in the first half of June. The draft Audit Report includes an unqualified opinion on the 2022 accounts.

Union position

- To acknowledge the information presented by the Secretariat.
- To congratulate the Secretariat on the unqualified opinion of the auditors on the 2022 accounts.

Agenda item 12

Transport Community Budget 2024 outline

As per Article 35 of the Treaty, the Regional Steering Committee shall adopt the budget of the Transport Community every year. The TCT Secretariat has drafted a proposal for the budget of 2024 for a first discussion at the Regional Steering Committee in June 2023. With a total amount of EUR 3,121,200, it foresees a 2% increase compared to 2023 (to account for inflation) and focuses on capacity building to be achieved through nineteen planned activities with topics centred around the objectives of the Transport Community Treaty. Indicatively, a final draft should be presented in autumn 2023, in view of adoption at the last RSC meeting in December 2023. The Commission is expected to submit to Council a proposal under article 218(9) TFEU at a later stage in 2023.

Union position

- To underline at this initial discussion its support to the proposed budget for 2024.
- To take note of the discussion and interventions from the Western Balkan partners, including possible modifications to the budget, in view of the next steps of the adoption procedure.

Agenda item 13

Decision on the renewal of the mandates of the Director and Deputy Director of TCT Secretariat

As elaborated during the Intermodal Working Party meetings on 31 March 2023 and 21 April 2023, the current mandates of the TCT Secretariat Director and Deputy Director are expiring on 1 August 2023 and 1 September 2023 respectively. The Union position in the matter was established by Council on 15 May 2023.⁶ The European Commission held initial contacts with the regional TCT members on the possible renewal of the mandates of the Director and Deputy Director for another term of three years each, in line with the applicable rules. A discussion was held with the Regional Steering Committee Members on 24 April 2023, following which an agreement was reached to launch the consultation of the TCT Ministerial Council. The written consultation of the Ministerial Council was successfully concluded on 26 May 2023.

Following the successful completion of the formal steps foreseen in the applicable rules, and taking account of several bilateral exchanges between the Commission and the Western Balkan Partners, the Regional Steering Committee is expected to support the renewal of mandates of the TCT Secretariat Director and Deputy Director during its meeting on 27 June 2023.

Union position

- The Union position for this agenda point has been established by Council on 15 May 2023.

⁶ ST 8515/23 + COR 1.

DRAFT AGENDA

20th Meeting of the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community
 27 June 2023 | 9:30 to 13:00 | Belgrade, TCT Headquarters and online

	POLICY	Materials
1.	Information on the Connectivity Summit (held 15-16 May 2023, Budva) and follow-ups - <i>Report from TCT Permanent Secretariat</i>	Report
2.	Information on the new generation of Action Plans on Road, Road Safety, Rail, Transport Facilitation, and Waterborne Transport and Multimodality for the period 2024-2027 - Outline (main features) of the new generation of Action Plans by the TCT Permanent Secretariat - <i>Tour de table</i>	Outline
3.	Information on the preparation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Annual Report - <i>Information from TCT Permanent Secretariat with timelines</i>	Info note
4.	Demonstration of Transport Observatory Data Information System (TODIS) - live functionality by TCT Permanent Secretariat	N/A
5.	Information from the European Commission on Safe and Sustainable Transport Programme (post Western Balkan Investment Framework (WBIF) / Grant Application Form (GAF)) - <i>Information from the European Commission</i>	To be decided
6.	Draft Report on the Progress of the Study “ <i>Assessment of the Rail Market in the Western Balkans in Terms of Capacities, Policies, Economic and Technical Level of Development of Freight and Passenger Transport Segments</i> ” - Presentation of the draft report by the TCT Permanent Secretariat - <i>Tour de table</i>	Draft report
7.	Information on Cooperation with Observing Participants - <i>Information from TCT Permanent Secretariat</i>	To be determined
	ADMINISTRATION	
8.	Discussion on the detailed drafting of proposed changes to the Rules on Reimbursement of Expenses to Participants at the Meetings Organised by the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat	Detailed drafting document
9.	Report from 6 th Budget Committee meeting of Transport Community - <i>Report from the Chair of the Budget Committee</i>	To be determined
10.	Mid-Year Report on the Transport Community Annual Work Programme 2023 - <i>Information from TCT Permanent Secretariat</i>	Mid-Year Report
11.	Presentation of the Transport Community Audit Report for 2022 - <i>Information from TCT Permanent Secretariat</i>	Audit Report
12.	Transport Community Budget 2024 outline - <i>Information from TCT Permanent Secretariat</i>	Info note

13.	Decision on the renewal of the mandates of the Director and Deputy Director of TCT Permanent Secretariat	Decision
14.	AOB - <i>Information on the EU Mobility Week</i>	Outline

