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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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ST 15256/23 + ADD 1

Subject: COUNCIL DECISION on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community as regards the adoption of the budget of the Transport Community for 2024

COUNCIL DECISION on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community as regards the introduction of a common set of rules on the reimbursement of expenses incurred by persons from outside the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community who are invited to participate in meetings of the Transport Community

– Adoption

1. On 8 November 2023,¹ the European Commission proposed two draft Council decisions on EU positions in the Regional Steering Committee of the EU-Western Balkans Transport Community, one in preparation of the budget for 2024, the other one to prepare changes to rules on the reimbursement of expenses incurred by participants to meetings of the Transport Community who are not employed by the Permanent Secretariat. The corresponding decisions of the Regional Steering Committee are on the draft agenda for its meeting on 11 December 2023.

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2. The Working Group on Transport – Intermodal Questions and Networks discussed the proposal on 28 October 2022. The Commission representative explained that indicative outlines for both initiatives had been discussed in previous meetings of the working group. The proposed budget for 2024 represents a 2% increase compared to 2023. This was justified by ongoing inflationary developments in the Region and the EU. This amount will cover the running costs of the Permanent Secretariat and the organisation of the meetings of the different bodies of the Transport Community. It also reflects a strong focus on capacity building activities and technical assistance for the Regional Partners, while the appropriation for studies decreases at the same time. The envelope for human resources decreases slightly, as does the one for the Ministerial Council, as there is only one meeting planned for 2024.
3. As regards the envisaged changes to the reimbursement rules, the Commission representative referred to difficulties experienced in the past with travel organisation and cost coverage for expert participation in meetings of the Transport Community. The idea was to merge the current rules for external experts² with those for representatives of the Regional Partners³, so that, according to the meeting concerned, delegations may be composed of up to two persons.
4. Delegations did not express concerns. The Presidency concluded that the draft EU positions were supported in principle but gave delegations additional time for scrutinising them. Following the meeting of the working group, no delegation requested to continue the discussion.

² Decision No 2020/05 of the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community on the rules on the reimbursement of expenses incurred by persons from outside the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community who are invited to attend meetings in an expert capacity.

³ Decision No 2021/02 of the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community on the rules on the reimbursement of expenses incurred by persons from outside the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community who are invited to participate in meetings of the Transport Community.

5. Consequently, it is suggested, subject to endorsement by the Permanent Representatives Committee, that Council decides on the EU positions in the Regional Steering Committee as set out, after lawyer-linguistic revision,
- in respect of the budget for 2024, in document ST 15649/23 + ADD 1;
 - in respect of the new reimbursement rules for external participation, in document ST 15256/23 + ADD 1⁴.
6. Once adopted, the decisions will be published in the Official Journal and the European Parliament will be informed about them.
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⁴ The documents from the lawyer-linguists will be available, at the latest, on 5 December 2023, 15:00.