Council of the European Union

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council on 5 December 2024 Resilience of EU transport infrastructure to extreme climate-related and geophysical events – Information from Spain

In recent years, Europe has experienced a series of extreme weather, climate-related and geophysical events. To illustrate: in 2016, Italy was struck by the Amatrice earthquake; in 2017, Portugal was devastated by wildfires; in 2021, Germany and Belgium suffered catastrophic floods; shortly thereafter, Greece faced wildfires while Italy dealt with severe flooding; in September of this year, Central Europe experienced significant floodings, severely affecting different European member states; and over a month ago, Spain was hit by floods that caused a social, and economic catastrophe.

Evidence strongly suggests that global warming has made phenomena like these more frequent, intense, and severe. Today, our infrastructures face growing exposure to risks such as extreme rainfall, rising temperatures, heatwaves, water stress and droughts, rising sea levels, river flooding, high winds, and landslides. This makes it imperative to adopt measures in the design, construction, adaptation and management of transport infrastructure to enhance its resilience and capacity to respond to these challenges.

We are fully aware that this is not a new issue. The institutions of the European Union have had this matter on their agenda for some time, and the Commission has already taken steps, such as including a provision in the CEF framework and introducing the topic in the TEN-T Regulation. However, the time has come to give it the significant push it truly requires.

To address these issues effectively, we need to intensify actions on two levels:

Readiness. We need to develop the capacity to respond swiftly to extreme weather events by developing warning systems, ensuring rapid recovery, and efficiently rebuilding or rehabilitating transport infrastructure. This requires identifying critical transportation infrastructure, supporting solutions to guarantee the continuity of essential services, defining alternative access routes, and facilitating access for reconstruction workers and emergency professionals in disaster zones.

Preparedness. We must prioritize building and rebuilding infrastructure with resilience in mind, incorporating climate considerations and adopting structural mitigation measures. A holistic approach is essential—one that integrates new climate variables throughout the planning and execution phases and ensures that priority infrastructure is equipped to withstand the impacts of climate change. The vulnerability analyses to assess infrastructure exposure and sensitivity to climate changes, as well as risk analyses to evaluate the probability and severity of potential climate impacts and identify vulnerable areas will play an important role. This approach is already included in the EU National Adaptation Plans, but expertise, time, and resources are needed.

Adequate planning and financing are essential to effectively integrate climate change considerations into the design, construction, adaptation and management of our infrastructure. As discussions surrounding the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the allocation of CEF financing progress, it is crucial to prioritize and ensure the resilience of our infrastructure.