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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
No. prev. doc.:	ST 13641/18 TRANS 528 FIN 870
Subject:	Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 19/2018 entitled "A European high-speed rail network: not a reality but an ineffective patchwork" – Adoption

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 26 June 2018, the European Court of Auditors published Special Report No 19/2018 entitled "*A European high-speed rail network: not a reality but an ineffective patchwork*".
2. Pursuant to the rules set out in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the European Court of Auditors¹, the Permanent Representatives Committee instructed on 11 July 2017 the Working Party on Transport - Intermodal Questions and Networks to examine the report².

¹ Doc. 7515/00 FIN 127 + COR 1.

² Doc. 10888/18 FIN 541 TRANS 317

II. WORK AT THE PREPARATORY BODY

3. The European Court of Auditors presented their Special Report to the Working Party on Transport - Intermodal Questions and Networks on 5 September 2018. The Working Party developed the draft Council conclusions in its meetings on 21 September, 24 October and 7 November 2018.

III. CONCLUSIONS

4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to endorse the attached draft Council conclusions and to submit them to the EYCS Council for adoption on 26 November 2018.
 5. The Council is invited to adopt the conclusions attached to this note.
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Draft Council conclusions
on
Special Report 19/2018 by the European Court of Auditors

THE COUNCIL

1. TAKES NOTE of the Special Report 19/2018 by the European Court of Auditors regarding high-speed rail network and of the open approach of the Court, including as regards the long-term planning and cost efficiency of the network.
2. UNDERLINES the importance of high-speed rail services for the mobility of citizens, economic activities and the protection of the environment.
3. RECALLS the TEN-T Regulation adopted in 2013, which provides for a strategic and coordinated rail network planning covering the whole territory of the EU and specifies those parts of the railway network that are to be developed according to high speed standards. EMPHASIZES the role played by the European Coordinators in facilitating the development of the Core Network Corridors and in particular for the implementation of cross-border projects. STRESSES, however, that the completion of the core and comprehensive network depends, amongst other things, on the availability of appropriate financial resources.
4. UNDERLINES that planning and development of railway networks, and notably high-speed ones, is a complex, costly and time-consuming process and has to be carried out in a holistic approach taking into account respective policy priorities and economic rationale. CONSIDERS, however, the Special Report as a call for a renewed coordinated focus on high-speed rail services.
5. REMINDS that the work on the fourth railway package, which foresees lifting of barriers to interoperability, enhancing safety and liberalising passenger rail markets, was concluded in December 2016 and its implementation is on-going. HIGHLIGHTS that several provisions of this package are already now shaping the market of high-speed rail services.

6. IDENTIFIES improvements at border crossing sections on infrastructure, operational aspects and services as an important factor towards a seamless and efficient European rail network and NOTES the importance of cooperation among Member States in order to complete or upgrade those sections of the network.
7. NOTES the potential of international high-speed rail services for the modal shift in medium and long distance passenger transport to rail and CONSIDERS it useful that the Commission reflects on measures to further promote such a modal shift where economically or environmentally desirable.
8. RECOGNISES that the report is timely in view of the preparation of the Connecting Europe Facility for the period 2021-2027 and of the future review of the guidelines on the trans-European transport networks. ACKNOWLEDGES that past projects and experiences provide a valuable information basis for better developing new high-speed lines and services.
9. REMINDS that according to the Treaties transport policies are an area of shared competence, and in particular any coordination and planning regarding the trans-European transport networks is to be carried out among the Member States, in liaison with the Commission. Any initiatives by the Commission to facilitate such coordination must be pursued in close cooperation with the Member States.
10. ACKNOWLEDGES that the recommendations of the Special Report provide an opportunity to reflect on how to ensure an effective, cost-efficient, competitive, user-friendly and coherent high-speed rail network in Europe.