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#### 'I/A' ITEM NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council  
Subject: Special Report No 17/2018 by the European Court of Auditors:  
Commission's and Member States' actions in the last years of the 2007-  
2013 programmes tackled low absorption but had insufficient focus on  
results  
- Adoption

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1. On 18 September 2018, the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 17/2018 entitled "Commission's and Member States' actions in the last years of the 2007-2013 programmes tackled low absorption but had insufficient focus on results" was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*<sup>1</sup>.
2. Pursuant to the rules laid down in the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors<sup>2</sup>, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part II), at its meeting on 10 October 2018, instructed the Working Party on Structural Measures to examine this report according to the rules laid down in the mentioned conclusions above.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 329, 18.9.2018, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Doc. 7515/00 FIN 127 + COR 1.

3. The Working Party on Structural Measures examined the Special Report on 7 November 2018. All delegations agreed on the draft Council conclusions as set out in the Annex to this note on 16 November 2018.
  4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is, therefore, invited to recommend to the Council to adopt, as an "A" item, these draft Council conclusions as set out in the Annex to this note at one of its future meetings.
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**DRAFT**

**Council conclusions on Special Report No 17/2018 by the European Court of Auditors:  
Commission's and Member States' actions in the last years of the 2007-2013 programmes  
tackled low absorption but had insufficient focus on results**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

- (1) WELCOMES Special Report No 17/2018 by the European Court of Auditors (hereafter referred to as "the Court") and the Commission's observations to the Report;
- (2) TAKES NOTE of the findings of the Report, in particular that:
  - The late adoption of the legislative framework and in consequence the Operational Programmes, as well as the overlapping of programme periods, inevitably slowed down the absorption of funds;
  - The Commission started rather late before the end of the eligibility period to assist Member States with poorly absorbing Operational Programmes;
  - Some of the measures used to increase absorption focused more on absorption and the compliance with rules than on results;
  - Due to the type of information received by Member States and in some cases the lack of legislative provisions requiring reporting, the Commission did not have a comprehensive overview of the measures used to increase absorption and their impact;
- (3) NOTES that the Commission has accepted all the recommendations of the Court and has taken measures to follow-up to the recommendations in cooperation with Member States;
- (4) THANKS the Commission for its initiative "Task Force for Better Implementation" during the period 2007-2013, which provided useful assistance to a number of Member States in speeding up the allocation of available funds to projects;

- (5) WELCOMES the submission by the Commission of legislative proposals for cohesion policy post-2020 at the end of May 2018 and IS COMMITTED to bringing forward work on these proposals in line with the conclusions of the European Council of June 2018;
  - (6) UNDERLINES its conviction that absorption cannot be an aim in itself and REITERATES its commitment to the result-orientation, coherence and simplification of cohesion policy;
  - (7) ENCOURAGES Member States to start preparations for the next programming period as early as possible in cooperation with the Commission in order to prevent implementation delays in the future.
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