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European Union

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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Prague Declaration on strategic transport infrastructure development and financing <i>- Information by the Czech delegation</i>

Delegations will find attached an information note prepared by the Czech delegation on the above-mentioned subject for consideration under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Transport, Telecommunications and Energy) on 18 June 2024.

Information on the Prague Declaration on strategic transport infrastructure development and financing

Information by the Czech delegation

The Czech Republic will inform the delegations about a joint Ministerial meeting with Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and the European Commission, that took place on 14th June in Prague.

The meeting focused on development of transport infrastructure and possibilities of its financing. With recently adopted TEN-T revision policy, there is a new essential framework to create a reliable and seamless transport network without bottlenecks and missing links. The particular focus of the meeting was on the development of High-Speed Rail connections in the European Union, with a special focus on North-South and West-East transport axis.

The discussions also revolved around funding strategies and collaborative approaches to ensure successful implementation of strategic infrastructure projects, in relation to the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework.

As the outcome of the meeting, the Prague Declaration on strategic transport infrastructure development and its financing was signed by the participating Member States, concluding that a sufficient financing for strategic transport projects is of the utmost importance. Therefore, further cooperation on the issue of financing among Member States is needed to ensure sufficient allocation for our strategic transport projects.

Declaration of the Ministers responsible for transport
of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, Hungary, the Republic of Latvia,
the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Poland, and the Slovak Republic
on strategic transport infrastructure development and financing

"Prague Declaration"

We, the Ministers responsible for transport of Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia, meeting in Prague, declare our unified commitment to the development of strategic joint transport infrastructure projects in order to improve connectivity of the European Union.

Recognizing the paramount importance of transport development for achieving European and global green goals, fostering economic growth and competitiveness, we affirm our joint efforts towards a sustainable, smart, and resilient transport network.

Transport Development for a Better Mobility in the Future

Emphasizing the critical role of transport development, we underscore the necessity for robust collaboration between our States, the European Union, and neighboring countries that share similar values with the European Union, such as the rule of law, human rights and international norms and standards, to ensure sufficient, seamless, reliable, and comfortable connections.

Recognizing railway transport as one of the greenest and most efficient modes available, we prioritize its development with a focus on building new High-Speed Rail connections in Central and North-East parts of the EU. Their completion and thus – bridging the missing links of the Single European Transport Area – especially on the geostrategic North-South axis, is imperative for establishing a resilient and reliable transport network, as mandated also by the TEN-T policy.

Acknowledging the requests to ensure sufficient capacity of the rail network, make railway more competitive and capable of meeting military mobility needs, we confirm our continuous commitment to further modernizing the existing railway infrastructure.

Standing in full support of the reconstruction and development of transport links with Ukraine and Moldova, we acknowledge the need for strategic investments in civilian and military infrastructure.

Transport Financing

Underlying that delivery of EU-level transport goals and climate change mitigation by 2030 directly depend on the availability of sufficient financing while considering the EU funds, specifically Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and Cohesion Policy funds, as absolutely crucial tools for financing transport projects also in future.

Stressing the importance of not only continuing the CEF but also significantly increasing its ambition in the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework in order to secure funding for current and future transport projects in accordance with TEN-T policy and the European Green Deal goals, with particular priority for the development of essential cross-border transport infrastructure projects, including military mobility needs.

Stressing the need to find sources of financing for the green transformation of transport, in particular meeting the requirements arising from the AFIR regulation.

Highlighting the need to develop adequate instruments to ensure bridge financing and transition between existing Funds and different multiannual financial frameworks with the aim to provide continuity in the longer term and facilitate implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects.

Recognizing the urgency and importance of these projects, we actively explore and embrace alternative sources and instruments, including loans and public-private partnerships, to supplement funding for transport infrastructure. Therefore, we expect that the proposal for the next MFF will already include conditions that not only allow but also facilitate combination of various financial mechanisms, giving additional impetus to large-scale transport project delivery.

Conclusion

With unwavering determination, we reaffirm our dedication to enhancing transport infrastructure, understanding its pivotal role in achieving environmental, economic, and societal objectives.

By working together with the other Member States, the European Commission, and the European Parliament, and utilizing various financing mechanisms, we pledge to build a sustainable, resilient, and interconnected transport network that benefits our citizens and the broader European community.

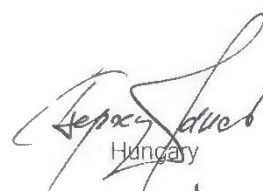
In Prague on June 14, 2024



Czechia



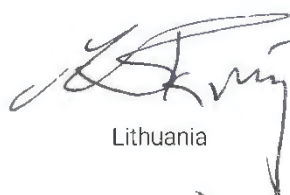
Estonia



Hungary



Latvia



Lithuania



Poland



Slovakia