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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	European Court of Auditors' special report no. 09/2020: The EU core road network: shorter travel times but network not yet fully functional - Draft Council conclusions

Delegations will find in the Annex draft Council Conclusions in response to the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 09/2020 entitled: "The EU core road network: shorter travel times but network not yet fully functional".

Draft Council conclusions
on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 09/2020:
The EU core road network: shorter travel times but network not yet fully functional

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

1. TAKES NOTE of Special Report No 09/2020 by the European Court of Auditors on the EU core road network.
2. REMARKS that the special report assesses the progress made towards achieving the EU objective of completing a fully functioning TEN-T core network by 2030 and the Commission's strategic role in achieving this objective.
3. RECALLS the Council conclusions of December 2017 on the progress of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) implementation and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for transport, where the Council reiterated the commitment to implement the TEN-T network.
4. WELCOMES the findings of the report regarding the progress made on the TEN-T network in relation to the overall increased number of kilometres of motorways and shortened travel times since 2007 which have led to time savings and contributed to enhanced road safety and better quality of travelling, and UNDERLINES the importance of maintaining a proper funding in order to achieve a fully functioning TEN-T core network by 2030.

5. ACKNOWLEDGES the differences identified by the report as regards the various degrees of completion rates of the TEN-T core network in the Member States while also NOTES the Court's assessment according to which the overall completion rate of the core network at EU level was around 77 % in 2016, and STRESSES that several Member States have achieved considerable progress in the meantime in developing their part of the core network.
6. TAKES note of the report's assessment that ESIF funding available for road infrastructure projects could be better targeted in order to bring it in line with investment priorities linked to the TEN-T core road network, while also HIGHLIGHTS that funding allocation for roads under CEF almost exclusively targeted the core network, including cross-border sections.
7. RECALLS the importance of the comprehensive network for fostering cohesion and for ensuring the accessibility and connectivity of all regions in the Union.
8. UNDERLINES the importance of cross-border sections for seamless travel and for a fully functional TEN-T network and RECALLS in this context that a number of major TEN-T cross-border projects with a foreseen completion date before 2030 are currently being implemented.
9. WELCOMES the finding of the Court of Auditors that a more coordinated approach towards secure parking areas and alternative clean fuel infrastructure can enable seamless travel along the TEN-T core road network, and UNDERLINES in this respect the importance of the availability of all clean alternative fuels along the sections of the TEN-T corridors.
10. RECALLS that, in order to achieve no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, the European Commission has adopted the European Green Deal, and WELCOMES the ambition to boost the multimodal transport which contributes to achieving this goal.
11. CONSIDERS that the maintenance of national roads, also taking into account its impact on road safety, plays an important role in the overall state of the road network in the medium to long term and therefore AGREES on the importance to reserve sufficient financial resources to cover the maintenance costs of road infrastructure and crucial links.

12. TAKES note of the recommendation of the Court that the Commission should strengthen its approach to infrastructure maintenance though also RECALLS that Member States remain competent with respect to infrastructure maintenance.
13. TAKES note of the Court's recommendations to the Commission to prioritise the available Cohesion Fund and ERDF for roads on investment in the core network and ENCOURAGES Member States to provide appropriate planning with a view to completing the TEN-T core network by 2030, while paying particular attention to cross-border sections.
14. TAKES note that given the impact of the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic on Member States' budgets, the development of the TEN-T core network requires continued and adequate financial support. In some Member States, for instance, it would be an opportunity to reduce the disparities in the development of the network.
15. NOTES the Court's recommendations to the Commission to enhance its monitoring system with intermediate targets, and to apply a systematic, uniform and timely approach that would allow to assess progress towards the completion of the core network in order to make reliable forecast as to its likely completion by 2030 and to allow the Commission to undertake corrective actions provided for in the TEN-T Regulation.
