



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 15 December 2020
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COWEB 176

'I' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
No. Cion doc.:	13098/20 + ADD1
No. prev. doc.:	13777/20
Subject:	Council Decision on the EU position as regards the adoption of the budget of the Transport Community for 2021 - Decision to use the written procedure for the adoption

1. On 26 November 2020, the European Commission submitted a proposal for a Council decision establishing an EU position within the EU-Western Balkan Transport Community's Regional Steering Committee, as regards the adoption of the budget of the Transport Community for 2021.
2. The adoption of the 2021 annual budget by the Regional Steering Committee is necessary for pursuing the implementation of the Treaty on the Transport Community and the ramp-up of its Permanent Secretariat. The Commission proposed an overall amount of EUR 3.525.000, of which EUR 3.300.000 are fresh credits. The European Union's contribution to this budget amounts to 80 per cent.

3. More specifically, the proposed 2021 budget can be detailed as follows: EUR 1.465.706 are foreseen for staff costs, EUR 237.600 for the travel costs, EUR 403.080 for office equipment and furniture, EUR 262.890 for the running costs of the Secretariat, EUR 690.000 are earmarked for studies and technical assistance, EUR 215.850 for the organisation of the various bodies of the Transport Community, EUR 249.874 would be allocated to a reserve. An indicative amount of EUR 225.000 would be carried over from the 2020 budget¹.
4. The Working Party on Transport - Intermodal Questions and Networks examined the proposal on 27 November and 4 December 2020 through videoconference meetings. Some delegations questioned the overall increase of the budget for 2021. The doubts were based on the low budget execution for 2020 (estimated at 34,5%), the constraints on travelling and organising meetings caused by the COVID-19 crisis and the huge increase in equipment costs. From a general perspective, the argument was put forward that expenses must be optimised in light of the European Council conclusions of 17-21 July 2020² which called on all EU institutions, bodies, agencies and their administrations to conduct a regular staff screening that ensures the optimisation of staff resources at the current level.
5. The Presidency asked the Commission for a non-paper providing justification on the increase of certain budget lines, in order to evaluate if there is room for improvement. In its non-paper of 9 December 2020³ the Commission detailed the justification for the different budget lines, provided information on staff posts and job descriptions of the Permanent Secretariat as well as on the budget execution in previous years.

¹ Indicative amount, pending on the closure of certain procurement procedures still in 2020.

² See doc EUCO 10/20, p. 59.

³ See ST 13825/20.

6. Based on the comments from delegations and the Commission non-paper, the Presidency prepared a compromise proposal.⁴ In view of the continuing ramp-up of the Permanent Secretariat on the one hand, and the uncertainty of carrying out certain activities due to COVID-19 on the other, the proposal foresees to establish a budget at the level of 2020 and to allow in addition the carry-over of certain budget appropriations from 2020. In detail, EUR 3.000.000 of fresh credits are provided for the 2021 budget, of which EUR 1.465.706 are foreseen for staff costs (unchanged amount), EUR 172.560 for the travel costs (-27,4%), EUR 353.080 for office equipment and furniture (-12,4%), EUR 247.590 for the running costs of the Secretariat (-5,8%), EUR 400.000 are earmarked for studies and technical assistance (-28,6%), EUR 193.350 for the organisation of the various meetings of the Transport Community's bodies (-10,4%), and EUR 217.714 would be allocated to a reserve (-12,9%).

The indicative amount for carry-over credits was set at EUR 180.000 (-20%), following information from the Commission that the contract for a videoconferencing system would have to be covered by fresh credits.

7. The Presidency compromise proposal was circulated among delegations with the request to indicate by 15 December 2020 (morning) if there was need for coming back to the item again. No delegation indicated this to be the case.

⁴ See ST 13777/20 dated 10 December 2020.

8. In light of this, it is suggested to the Permanent Representatives Committee:
- to confirm its agreement on the text of the proposed Council decision as contained in the Commission proposal (ST 13098/20 + ADD1) and revised by the Presidency compromise (ST 13777/20); and
 - to decide, in accordance with the first subparagraph of Article 12(1) of the Council's Rules of Procedure and Article 1 of Council Decision 2020/430, as extended, on the use of the written procedure for adopting the proposed Decision as set out, after lawyer-linguistic revision, in documents ST 11353/20 and ST 11356/20.⁵
9. Once adopted, the decision will be published in the Official Journal and the European Parliament will be informed about it.
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⁵ Note: the documents for adoption will be available in CARS in English at noon, in other languages at 15.30 on 17 December 2020.