Review of the European neighbourhood policy

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The Council adopted conclusions emphasising the importance of **strengthened transport cooperation and better transport connections with neighbouring regions covered by the Enlargement and European Neighbourhood policies**, in particular the Western Balkans, the Mediterranean region and the Eastern Partnership countries, with a view to bringing about deeper economic integration and closer political association.

To achieve these goals, the Council advocates improvement of transport infrastructure, especially by:

- better linking of the infrastructure of neighbouring countries with the trans-European transport network, and
- closer integration of transport markets, in particular by extending the European Common Aviation Area, removing barriers in maritime transport, increasing interoperability of railway systems and streamlining border crossing and administrative procedures.

The Council is, however, stressing that closer market integration will depend on neighbouring countries' readiness to do so and on their progress in applying safety, security, environmental and social **standards equivalent to those of the EU**.

The existing financial resources such as the Neighbourhood Investment Facility, which can leverage funding from international financial institutions, should be used to help those countries make the necessary reforms.

Moreover, the Council welcomes the establishment of an Eastern Partnership Transport Panel, due to be launched at the Eastern Partnership ministerial conference on 24-25 October in Krakow (Poland).