



**COUNCIL OF
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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Partial summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism on 17 June 2013

The meeting was chaired by Mr Brian Simpson (S&D, UK).

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Exchange of views with Irish Minister for Transport, Mr Varadkar

Minister Varadkar delivered the speech in annex.

In the exchange of views that followed, the Irish Presidency was praised and thanked for its work by all the speakers, including the Commission representative.

Mr Grosch (EPP, BE) on behalf of the EPP, Mr El Khadraoui (S&D, BE) on behalf of the S&D group, and Ms Meissner (ALDE, DE) on behalf of the ALDE group expressed the hope of reaching an agreement on the Airport Package very soon. Mr Grosch also stressed the need to agree on the CEF by the end of the Irish Presidency. Most MEPs regretted the lack of progress on the Single

European Skies dossier, but recognized this was not the Presidency's fault (Mr Grosch (EPP, BE), Ms Meissner (ALDE, DE), Mr Cramer (Greens, DE), Ms Foster (ECR, UK)) and stressed that the large number of projects needed for the sector required strong financing, which Member States seemed reluctant to grant in ongoing MFF negotiations (Mr El Khadraoui (S&D, BE), Ms Meissner (ALDE, DE), Mr Cramer (Greens, DE), Mr Koumoutsakos (EPP, EL)).

Ms Meissner (ALDE, DE) asked the Minister what the Irish position was on maritime spatial planning and the integration of coastal management. Ms Foster (ECR, UK) praised the emphasis placed on the role of business in transport, the agreement reached on Galileo and EGNOS, and the work of the Sky and Space Intergroup, but she also argued that the Airport package was unnecessary. Together with Ms Ticau (S&D, RO), she also welcomed the agreement on the Tachograph. Mr Koumoutsakos (EPP, EL) congratulated the Presidency for fully recognizing of the role of the European Parliament as a co-legislator. Mr Higgins (EPP, EI) concluded by thanking full-heartedly the Irish Presidency for its commitment and determination on Transport dossiers.

In his response and concluding remarks, the Minister noted that Interoperability was a significant first step towards the agreement on the entire Fourth Railway Package. Whilst the Airport package would be dealt with by the Lithuanians, who were likely to prioritize air passengers rights, he hoped that the CEF could be concluded in the following two weeks. Concerning the impact of the MFF on CEF, he noted that provisions on flexibility would allow unspent resources to be invested in transport projects, but he had a very limited role in the ongoing negotiations. In response to Ms Meissner, he noted that the Irish shared some of the concerns expressed in Council by other Member States on maritime spatial planning and integration of coastal management, especially on subsidiarity and proportionality, but also that Ireland recognized the value of the integrated coastal management and was committed to achieve swift progress. He regretted that the Single European Skies proposal came out too late for the Council to discuss it under this Presidency, and concluded by noting that the number and financing of transport projects were matters for Member States only to decide on.

Minister's statement to EP TRANSPORT Committee 17 June

I would like to thank Brian and the Committee for this opportunity to come back 5 months after my last appearance to review the achievements of the Irish Presidency in the transport and tourism sector.

Stability, jobs and growth have been the core themes for the Irish Presidency. Transport has a vital role to play here both as a driver of Europe's global competitiveness and a key enabler in realising the full potential of the single market. The over-riding priority for our Presidency has been to promote a safer, more integrated, more efficient and sustainable transport network for Europe. As the last trio of Presidencies during the lifetime of the current Commission and Parliament, we have focused our efforts on the business end of advancing the legislative agenda and on achieving tangible results. An important dimension to this has been the very close cooperation that we have enjoyed with our Trio partners, Lithuania and Greece. For these reasons, TENT and the Connecting Europe Facility were our key targets and I am happy to say that we have managed to broker an agreement on TENT and make substantial progress on CEF as well. These were difficult files where the gaps between the Council and the European Parliament were significant.

On TENT, what we have agreed on provides a strong impetus for Member States to deliver on the objectives and provides for a robust but streamlined arrangements to address some of the deficiencies evident in the last TENT. This will now be a regulation which is directly binding on Member States. It was vital for all of us to ensure that the requirements and ambition set out in the regulation were both realistic and achievable. I am very confident that we have, between us, negotiated a regulation which will provide for a step-change in the EU transport infrastructure development over the next thirty years. I would like to thank the two co-rapporteurs – Georgios Koumoutsakos and Ismail Ertug – for their intense work and their shared commitment to achieving a worthwhile result on this long and complex file.

On CEF, I met the Rapporteurs again at lunch time. It is clear that there is now commitment on both sides to continue working towards an agreement under the Irish Presidency. The overall budget for CEF was much less than we had hoped for and this meant that there needed to be a re-orientation of the objectives and ambition in this financial support instrument. For transport, we have managed to agree 99% of the relevant articles and many of key horizontal issues relating to innovative financial instruments and VAT. The budget for transport will be substantially more than the current one and this is appropriate to the high level of ambition which we have agreed under the new TENT guidelines.

Again, I am confident that the good spirit of dialogue we have developed with Mr. Riquet, Mme Ayala Sender and Mme Valean from the ITRE Committee over these intensive months of negotiations will produce a fair and worthwhile result for all three sectors involved and add significant European value in the process.

As you know, Vice President Kallas published a number of new proposals since we last met including the 4th Railway Package. This was also a priority file for us – particularly in terms of the impact on the competitiveness of the European rail sector. I am happy to report that at last week's Transport Council we were able to secure agreement on the first key element of this package, which is the Interoperability directive. Given the complexity of this dossier and the divergent interests around the Council table, it represents a significant achievement and a very importantly the foundation stone for building consensus around the other elements of the package, particularly the more politically sensitive issues of unbundling and market access. We have been following the debate in this committee on this important package with interest and I understand that the six rapporteurs are putting together their draft reports which will be presented in July.

The interoperability proposal aims to accelerate the removal of certain technical and administrative barriers in the sector. In particular, it is essential to streamline the processes and cut costs and timeframes when it comes to putting rolling stock and infrastructure into service. The sticking points in Council relating to the proposed transfer of competences from the national safety authorities to the European Railway Agency concerning the vehicle authorisation process have been resolved. Also, appropriate safeguards have been secured to ensure that the high level of safety on the Union rail system is maintained.

The General Approach retains the key objectives of the Commission's proposal, in particular regarding the harmonisation of procedures, criteria and timeframes for authorisations. The compromise review provisions allow for considered evolution of the framework for a single European vehicle authorisation. A transitional period of 5 years was essential to reach agreement in Council. I want to stress that this period will be one of intense and necessary preparations for the new arrangements – the Agency will have to be adequately staffed and adequately resourced, cooperation agreements between the Agency and the national safety authorities have to be put into place. The details of the new authorisation procedures have to be agreed and secured in implementing legislation. Thereafter, I believe that an appropriate level of flexibility is provided to Member States where rolling stock is intended for operations in one Member State only. However, in such cases, it will be a matter for the applicant to decide whether to apply for authorization to the national safety authority or to the Agency. The important thing is that the system is focused on the needs of applicants and operators, particularly by cutting costs and unnecessary red-tape, with due regard always for safety.

Another success in the field of land transport was agreement between Council and Parliament on the Tachograph Regulation. This represents a good result for the European haulage sector in terms of addressing tachograph fraud, improving driver's working conditions as well as promoting greater levels of safety and competition in the road transport sector. I want to particularly thank the Rapporteur for this file, Ms Ticau for her determination to get a balanced result on this important regulation, and I understand you will be approving the final text in that regard tomorrow.

Staying with land transport, we also secured agreement in Council last week to the final two elements of the Road Worthiness Package. This will now enable the Lithuanian Presidency to begin negotiations with the Parliament on the overall package. I am aware that the three rapporteurs involved – Ms SAVISAAR-TOOMAST, Ms. SEHNALOVÁ and Mr KUHN have been working intensively in parallel on these files which should ensure an early engagement.

Both Road Worthiness and Tachograph demonstrate our shared commitment to improving safety standards on our roads. This has been a theme for our Presidency and I am happy that we are now seeing the results of our collective efforts.

We also held a conference in Dublin on the theme of road safety focusing in particular on preventing serious injuries. The conference was an opportunity to hear the range of responses across Member States and internationally but to give greater visibility to this aspect of road safety where the focus in the past has tended to be on road deaths. I was happy to see that Ms Sehnalova attended the conference on behalf of the TRAN Committee. I also chaired an informal discussion amongst Transport Minister on the issue of road safety at our Council in March.

On the maritime front, I also placed particular importance at the outset on the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention – and specifically the two directives designed to ensure the EU takes a lead in delivering better safety standards and working conditions for the thousands of seafarers in Europe and around the globe. The Flag State implementation Directive ensures that EU member States monitor and enforce the MLC provisions for the working and living conditions of seafarers on board ships flying the flag of those States. The Port State implementation Directive ensures that all ships calling at EU ports are inspected for compliance with those working and living conditions. I am delighted to report that we have brokered agreement between Council and Parliament on both on these files. Brian was the rapporteur on the Port State file and I am grateful to him for his commitment to achieving an agreement – I'm told the negotiations were lively but ultimately very constructive. The Flag State file was led by Madame Beres, the Chair of the Employment Committee, and Brian, I hope you will also extend my thanks to her for her cooperation.

Adequate working conditions for seafarers are a prerequisite for the safe operation of shipping in Europe. The MLC enters into force in August this year and Europe is now ready to take a lead and be a credible voice in this sector. At a national level, the ratification process continues for many Member States as it involves revision of a century's worth of maritime legislation. Members can rest assured, Member States are all working very hard to meet the timetable.

There were also a number of technical but important files on the table which we were keen to advance. I am pleased that we have managed to secure the Parliament's agreement on the Recreational Craft Directive which has been under negotiation for almost two years. Although this is not the lead Committee on this file, it is transport –related and should serve not only to improve emission standards from the waterbased craft involved but also increase the competitiveness of European producers exporting to third country markets.

At last week's Council in Luxembourg, we also agreed a Council text on the new Marine Equipment Directive - which harmonises standards for equipment on board ships, and while this proposal is at first glance, very technical and abstract, it has very direct and tangible impacts, particularly in the development of a "blue growth" strategy, including the on-shore marine industry.

Traditionally, Europe has had a leading position in the marine equipment sector. It is a sector with a potential for growth and job-creation and where technical innovation, development and research play an important role. This Directive should serve to promote the proper functioning of the internal market for marine equipment by introducing a "wheelmark" which is a guarantee that safety requirements as regards design, construction and performance have been met. The wheelmark for marine equipment is the equivalent of the CE mark we all find today on our household appliances. We are happy to have paved the way for the incoming presidency to being negotiations on this file with the Parliament led by Mr Riquet.

I know this Committee takes a keen interest in the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy. Blue Growth has been a priority of the Irish Presidency, in particular developing an Action Plan for the Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic area, together with our Atlantic partners from the Parliament, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. The Action Plan, which was launched at a high-level meeting held in Galway on 24 May, aims to create sustainable growth in coastal regions and drive forward the blue economy in the Atlantic Member States. The Plan will be formally endorsed by the General Affairs Council next week on 25 June .

On the legislative side, a proposal for a Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning and integrated Coastal Management was presented to the Council and the Parliament in March. The Irish Presidency has prioritised discussion on this proposal and looks forward to handing this dossier over to the new Lithuanian Presidency to prepare for discussions with this Committee, under the able guidance of Rapporteur Gesine Meissner.

Looking to the skies above and to the future of Europe's satellite navigation systems, I am also happy to report agreement with the Parliament on the EU Regulation on the financing and governance of Galileo and EGNOS. This file was handled by ITRE but has implications and applications across transport as well. The Rapporteur Mr. Marinescu is also a member of this committee and I would like to thank him for his strong engagement with this file. The purpose of the Regulation is to establish a new financial and governance framework for the two European satellite navigation programmes for the next financial period 2014-2020 and beyond. Final sign off will be done once the overall MFF deal is agreed.

We were also busy on the aviation front. Last week, we got Council agreement on the Commission's new Occurrence Reporting Regulation. This new regulation will make a major contribution to safety in the aviation sector by improving the reporting system for incidents and therefore contribute to a more active and evidence-based aviation safety management system in the EU. The main objective of the proposal is the further reduction of the number of aircraft accidents and related fatalities, using civil aviation occurrence reporting to correct safety deficiencies and prevent them from reoccurring. As air traffic forecasts show, the number of flights is expected to almost double by 2030, the current aviation safety system needs to be adapted in order to keep up with the predicted increase in traffic both to maintain and further improve aviation safety. Lithuania will take this proposal to the next stage of negotiation with you during their Presidency. I am sure that your rapporteur on this file, Ms. DE VEYRAC, is of a similar mind as regards the importance of this piece of legislation from an aviation perspective.

We also kicked off discussions last week on the Commission's new Air Passenger Rights proposal. We all support the objectives behind this proposal. Air carriers need to comply with a high level of air passenger protection during travel disruptions. At the same time, we need to take into account the financial implications for the air transport sector and ensure that air carriers operate under harmonised conditions in a liberalised market. The proposal attempts to clarify some of the grey areas in existing legislation which have led to inconsistencies and loose standards in the application of the law. It also aims to strengthen the complaint handling mechanisms at the level of airlines and national authorities. It addresses certain imbalances which have arisen in terms of the costs that some of the obligations imposed by the Regulation have created for the airlines in certain exceptional circumstances. It also introduces more detailed rules on some of the existing rights, such as the right to information, to assistance and compensation, as well as proposing new rights, for example on mobility equipment and musical instruments.

The Commission's proposals last week concerning the development of the Single European Sky unfortunately came too late to enable us to progress it. But I know it's an area of great interest to the Committee and we must all work intensively in the period immediately ahead to make the necessary advances. In the context of the European Year of the Citizen, this proposal has a particularly strong resonance I believe. For our part, we will continue to devote time to this over the remaining weeks of our Presidency in order to hand it to the Lithuanians in good shape. I am aware the Committee has appointed Georges BACH as the rapporteur and your deliberations are running in parallel which should certainly ease the path for this file.

We also launched negotiations in Council on another important file which has potentially far-reaching benefits beyond transport - the Clean Power directive. The objective is to break the dependence on fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport by accelerating the market uptake of alternative fuels and vehicles adapted to their use. This proposal is essentially about encouraging greater deployment of charging and fuelling infrastructure from renewable energy sources. It places particular focus on charging infrastructure for electric vehicles – an area in which Ireland has pressed ahead in recent years.

There are divergent views in Council on some aspects of this proposal, particularly the costs involved and the appropriateness of the targets and deadlines contained in the annex to the proposal, there are also some valid questions which need to be considered, especially when it comes to standards and technology involved much of which is still evolving. For my part, I view this proposal as extremely important for the future of transport in Europe. We need to take a lead here and I believe we are in a very strong position to do so. I know your Rapporteur Mr. FIDANZA is pushing ahead with your examination of the proposal and there are some important discussions taking place here today and tomorrow on it. You will be pleased to hear that our Lithuanian partners have also prioritized this file for their six months.

There were other files of course which we had hoped to make progress on but for various reasons out of our control, we were unable to do so. The Airports Package is one of these. As you know, Council had reached its political position on all three elements of the package last December. However, the Parliament's position on the overall package was not clear until mid April which left us with little time to devote and our negotiations with you on other files, particularly when TENT

and CEF took precedence. We had also hoped to advance some other important proposals including, in the Maritime Sector, Passenger Ship Safety and legislation to advance the Blue Belt initiative, and in the aviation sector, the Joint Understanding on SESAR. These proposals are still in gestation within the Commission, but I do understand some may be published shortly.

I would like to finish up with a final word on Tourism which I know is an important element of your remit and mine. Tourism supports employment and economic activity right across the Union – often in places or for people with limited access to other economic opportunities. During the Presidency, I am happy to note that progress has been achieved on the COSME programme which, as you know, recognizes the importance of the tourism sector as an engine for growth and job creation. My colleague in the Irish government Richard Bruton the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation lead on this dossier and substantial progress has been achieved here as well.

This Committee's Tourism Task Force continues its work and I understand its members were invited to a very interesting Presidency conference in April which looked at the links between Tourism and heritage and culture and the lessons from various international perspectives on channelling heritage to enhance the tourism experience.

Members, I have only really given you a whistlestop tour of our achievements over the last five and half months. In total we have managed to secure agreements with the Parliament on 6 transport files and 5 political agreements at Council. Time was always our enemy but I am confident that our Lithuania friends will be well placed to pick up where we left off on some of the key dossiers I have mentioned. We set a very ambitious programme, we kept our focus on the business end and adopted a pragmatic and hopefully professional approach to the delivery of that programme.

I am very pleased with the level of cooperation that has been shown by the Transport Committee and the rapporteurs on the key files. A special thanks to the Committee Secretariat for your highly professional and diligent assistants who have eased the path for the Presidency.

Thank you so much, and I look forward to your comments and questions.
