



**COUNCIL OF
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REPORT

From:	The Presidency
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	9791/12 TRANS 144 MAR 60
Subject:	Blue Belt pilot project – Presidency's synthesis of Member States' views

I. Introduction

On 7 June 2012, the transport ministers discussed the Blue Belt pilot project within the framework of the Council (Transport, Telecommunications and Energy).

The basis for the policy debate were the Commission evaluation report on the Blue Belt pilot project¹, and an information note from the Presidency to Council².

¹ Commission Staff Working Document – Evaluation of the Blue Belt pilot project, SWD(2012) 145 final (doc. 10418/12).

² Doc. 9791/12 TRANS 144 MAR 60 + AD 1 + COR 1 + COR 2.

The ministerial debate was structured around three questions:

1. Would Ministers be in favour of further works to be undertaken to permanently include Blue Belt services in the legislative framework in order to facilitate the movement of cargo in the intra-EU maritime transport?
2. What measures can be undertaken to ensure better coordination between different authorities dealing with vessels arriving in EU ports to avoid duplication of controls and lengthy uncoordinated procedures?
3. Looking beyond Blue Belt, would Member States support further works to be undertaken to consider the future extension of the single window services to allow exchange of and access to information for all stakeholders in the maritime transport sector (ports, shipping companies, the inland waterways sector etc.)?

II. Presidency's synthesis of Member States' views

As an introductory remark, it should be noted that all delegations are positive to a continued implementation and further development of the Blue Belt services, with a view to removing unnecessary administrative barriers for maritime transport and trade. The message is clear: less administrative burdens, less red tape are needed if the competitiveness of maritime transport is to be enhanced.

As regards the first question, a broad majority of delegations support the Commission taking measures that shall look into permanently including Blue Belt Services in the EU legislative framework.

There were requests for a roadmap for the continued work.

At the same time several delegations stressed cost-efficiency and avoidance of duplication of efforts as important aspects that should be further analysed. In this context it was pointed out that it would be preferable to build upon existing systems rather than creating new ones.

Several delegations suggested that an analysis of the possible savings and administrative facilitation should be carried out before legislative initiatives are taken.

Furthermore, delegations stressed the important role of customs authorities, if real facilitation is to be achieved, and the importance of introducing more flexible customs procedures through a revision of the EU customs legislation.

Finally, there were voices asking for a clearer focus on the ultimate objective to create a real internal market for maritime transport, so as to ensure fair competition between different transport modes.

With regard to the second question, on better coordination between authorities, the importance of raising awareness of the Blue Belt concept through relevant information both from the Commission (EMSA) and from Member States was highlighted.

In this context, the Commission and forthcoming Presidencies were invited to create a forum for further discussions.

Some delegations also underlined that the implementation of the single window could be one way of ensuring further harmonisation and coordination between authorities.

As far as the third question is concerned, most delegations supported an extension of the single window allowing all stakeholders to exchange and have access to information, provided that protection of sensitive data is ensured.

The main focus should be on implementation of Blue Belt rather than on new projects concerning the single window. In this context, it was pointed out that one should wait for the implementation of the national single windows so as not to take premature decisions.

Also with regard to this question some delegations underlined that duplication of existing systems should be avoided and that focus should be on simplification rather than exchange of data.

The Presidency invites the Commission to take into account this synthesis of discussions in Council on the Blue Belt pilot project when further elaborating the appropriate initiatives.
