

Statement to parliament: EU Transport Council 11 December 2018

I attended the only formal Transport Council under the Austrian Presidency (the Presidency) in Brussels on Monday 3 December (2018).

The council reached general approaches on the social and market pillars of the first tranche of the 'mobility package'. The 'social pillar' is intended to establish a specific regulatory regime for the posting of workers in the road transport sector, and the 'market pillar' is intended to introduce new regulatory requirements for the operation of light commercial vehicles (vans) and to modify the 'cabotage' rules for vehicles operating in countries other than their country of establishment.

I welcomed the work that the Presidency had done to achieve compromises on these challenging proposals, give the range of view from Member States. During the discussion, I pressed for a further reduction in the proposed cabotage 'cooling-off period' (a period of time between cabotage operations) and for extending the period after which a vehicle should return to base to 10 weeks. After a lengthy debate a compromise was reached which included the reduction of the 'cabotage' cooling-off period to 5 days, clarifying when the posting of workers rules would apply to different haulage operations, removing altogether the requirement for the return of the vehicle, and retaining the original proposal to ban drivers from taking weekly rest in the cabin of their vehicles.

Following this, the Council reached a general approach on a proposal from the second tranche of the 'mobility package', to amend the current directive on combined transport. The existing directive liberalises cabotage operations when part of a freight journey that comprises a rail or sea leg. The general approach included an amendment to these cabotage provisions in line with the earlier compromise on cabotage rules.

The Council reached a general approach on the proposed directive on road infrastructure safety management (RISM), from the third tranche of the 'mobility package'.

The lunchtime debate consisted of ministers discussing how to address airspace capacity constraints and was followed by presentations from Eurocontrol Director General, Eamonn Brennan and Transport Commissioner, Violeta Bulc.

Later, the Council reached 2 general approaches on the proposed directive on minimum level of training for seafarers and the proposed regulation establishing a European maritime single window. In addition, the Council adopted conclusions on inland waterway transport.

The Council reached a partial general approach on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), endorsing the text presented by the Presidency. The

outstanding elements are those subject to horizontal negotiations on the multi-annual financial framework beyond 2020.

The Council noted the presidency's progress reports on discontinuing seasonal changes of time, rail passenger rights, streamlining the trans-European transport network, clean and energy efficient vehicles and electronic freight transport information.

Finally, there were several information points from member states, the Presidency and Commissioner Bulc under any other business. The Presidency updated Council on the provisional agreements reached with the European Parliament on electronic road tolling and exchange of information, safeguarding competition in air transport and aviation wet-leasing. Commissioner Bulc noted good progress in on-going EU-ASEAN aviation negotiations that she hoped would conclude this year. In reply to a joint declaration from Luxembourg, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and the Netherlands on the social agenda in aviation, Commissioner Bulc noted that she would present a progress report on the social agenda identifying actions for potential completion. Ireland intervened to defend the value of new business models in aviation. Commissioner Bulc also drew attention to the 17 December conference on sustainable transport infrastructure charging and internalisation of transport externalities to be held in Brussels. The Presidency provided an update on the EU's space programme and the outcome of the informal meeting of Transport and Environment ministers held in Graz on the 29 to 30 October 2018. Finally, Romania presented transport plans for its incoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union.