

Statement to Parliament: EU Transport Council 5 December 2017

I attended the only formal Transport Council under the Estonian Presidency (the Presidency) in Brussels on Tuesday 5 December.

First, the Council noted the Presidency's progress report, summarising discussions to date at official level, on Phase One of the Mobility Package. Work has focused on proposals designed to improve the clarity and enforcement of the EU road transport market (the 'market pillar') and proposals on the application of social legislation in road transport (the 'social pillar'). I broadly supported the progress made, emphasised the UK's commitment to a constructive safety-first approach to updating the rules, but also registered concerns over the proposed extension of scope of part of the regulations to small vans.

Following this, the Council adopted 3 sets of Council conclusions:

- on progress in Trans-European Network-Transport (TEN-T) and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)
- the Digitalisation of Transport
- the mid-term evaluation of Galileo, EGNOS and European GNSS Agency

Next, the Presidency held a policy debate on the 'road charging pillar' of the Mobility Package. The proposals to amend the existing Directives on HGV road tolls and user charges ('Eurovignette') and the interoperability of electronic road toll systems ('EETS') set out rules for charging vehicles using the road (but do not mandate such charging) and promote better functioning of charging across national barriers. The UK broadly welcomed provisions on improving the functioning and enforcement of electronic road tolling systems. However, the UK said we were opposed to proposals to broaden the scope of EU charging rules to include cars, and had concerns about the proposed phasing-out of time-based road charging and measures mandating hypothecation of revenues from congestion charging.

Following this, the Council noted the Presidency's progress report on official level discussions on Safeguarding Competition in Air Transport. The UK did not dispute the need for fair competition but urged caution on proposals for regulatory measures; it was important to avoid potential negative impacts on the liberalised aviation market, connectivity, consumers, and member states' bilateral aviation agreements with third countries.

Under Any Other Business, several items were discussed. Notably:

- Commissioner Bulc presented the Commission's recently published second phase of the Mobility Package, provided an update on the implementation of the extensive Aviation Strategy, alongside a Communication on Military Mobility, and noted progress on rail passenger rights negotiations

- Finland called for reconsideration of the Summertime Directive
- Germany updated on the second high-level group on automated and connected cars
- Poland drew attention to the 2018 International Maritime Days
- France promoted her proposed declaration at the upcoming 'one planet' summit calling on the IMO to adopt an ambitious strategy for the decarbonisation of international shipping
- Bulgaria presented transport plans for her incoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union