

Statement to parliament: EU Transport Council agenda for 3 December 2018

I will attend the last Transport Council under the Austrian Presidency (the Presidency) taking place in Brussels on Monday 3 December.

The Council will consider proposals from the first tranche of the 'mobility package'. Under the 'social pillar' of the package the Presidency will seek a general approach on proposals: to establish a specific regulatory regime for the posting of workers in the road transport sector; to introduce new regulatory provisions in relation to ensuring that drivers have the option regularly to return home; and to enable drivers to take their regular weekly rest in their vehicles provided that certain welfare-related conditions are met. Under the 'market pillar' of the package the Presidency will seek a general approach on proposals: 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. The government considers the package to be a necessary response to current issues with the functioning of the EU road transport market, in particular, uncoordinated national enforcement action in relation to posting of workers rules, and exploitation of some aspects of the regime by some non-compliant operators. The government is broadly content with the specific proposals, particularly with the compromise gained on limiting the extension of regulatory obligations to operators of larger vans which are also undertaking international haulage work.

Next, the Council is expected to reach a general approach on a proposal from the second tranche of the 'mobility package' to revise the current directive on combined transport. The proposal contains provisions that could improve promotion of modal shift across the EU and reduce congestion. The government considers that the proposal includes some positive changes to modernise the processes and, as currently drafted, will provide an acceptable balance between EU-wide action and national discretion.

Following this, the Council will consider a general approach on a proposal from the third tranche of the 'mobility package' to amend the current directive on road infrastructure safety management (RISM). The current directive was adopted to ensure that road safety considerations are at the forefront of all phases of the planning, design and operation of road infrastructure and currently applies to roads on the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). The government considers that the proposed increase in scope to include motorways and 'primary roads' is a proportionate expansion of the directive and is content with the proposal that member states define the 'primary roads' covered by it. The government believes the proposal strikes a balance that will allow member states to retain judgment over where the directive is applied in their own countries, while upholding the shared principles of robust safety inspection and excellence in road design.

There will be a progress report on the proposal to amend the directive on

discontinuing seasonal changes of time, which the government opposes. We have no plans to change Daylight Saving Time within the UK, and feel that the Commission has not provided enough evidence to demonstrate a strong case for changing the existing arrangements.

Afterwards, there will be a progress report on the proposal to revise the regulation on rail passengers' rights and obligations, aimed at strengthening the rights of rail passengers, including by improving access for people with disabilities or reduced mobility.

Following this, the Council is expected to reach a general approach on the proposal to amend the directive on the minimum training of seafarers. These changes will ensure that the legislation is up to date, and will provide the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) with additional time to decide whether to recognise an outside state's certification. The government considers the general approach to be satisfactory on the basis that the amendments are justified and appropriate to ensure that maritime directives are in line with international norms, and so that EMSA can make appropriately informed decisions.

The Council is also expected to reach a general approach on another proposal from the third tranche of the 'mobility package', to revise the current directive establishing a European maritime single window environment. This is intended to further harmonise the electronic submission of ship pre-arrival reporting formalities. The government supports digitisation here as it can provide benefits for business. The UK has engaged constructively in negotiations and has been able to share its existing expertise in many areas. The government welcomes the proposed general approach, which is satisfactory.

The Council is expected to reach a partial general approach on a proposed regulation on the Connecting Europe Facility. The proposal will move into the next multiannual financial framework with broadly the same funding allocation for transport as the current MFF. The government supports the value that a well-managed funding programme like the Connecting Europe Facility can bring to transport infrastructure. However, the regulation will take effect after the UK has left the EU, and the government is still considering its position on future involvement in the programme.

There will be a progress report on a proposal from the third tranche of the 'mobility package' on the proposed regulation on streamlining measures for the realisation of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). The proposal sets out requirements for the administrative procedures to be followed by the competent authorities in member states in providing approval for projects of common interest on the TEN-T core network.

There will be a progress report on a proposal from the second tranche of the 'mobility package' to amend the directive on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles. The directive looks to drive the uptake of clean vehicles, including cars, and light and heavy duty vehicles (including vans, trucks and buses).

There will also be a progress report on a proposal from the third tranche of

the 'mobility package' for a regulation on electronic freight transport information. This regulation is designed to correct a perceived lack of standardisation of acceptance by member states of electronic freight documents.

The Council will be asked to agree conclusions, which the UK supports, on the potential of inland waterway transport as an environment-friendly transport mode, offering existing capacity to alleviate congestion on roads.

Finally, under any other business, the Presidency will provide information on other current legislative proposals. Additionally, it will report back on the Informal Meeting of Transport and Environment Ministers that took place in Graz on the 29 to 30 October 2018, followed by an update on ASEAN Negotiations. The Luxembourg delegation will present information on the social agenda in aviation. The Commission will supply information on sustainable transport infrastructure charging and internalisation of transport externalities, and finally, the Romanian delegation will provide information on the work programme of their forthcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union.