

**(AE) TRANSPORT: SINGLE SKY – KALLAS FACING 28 COUNTRIES DIGGING HEELS IN**

*Vilnius, 16/09/2013 (Agence Europe)* – Does the Single European Sky (SES) need reforming already, or should what has already been sown be allowed to germinate? That is the question the European transport ministers asked themselves on Monday 16 September at their informal meeting in Vilnius, by invitation of the Lithuanian Presidency. They seem to prefer the option of pouring oil on troubled waters rather than rushing through the new measures contained in the recent SES 2+ package, to the extent that the European Transport Commissioner, Siim Kallas, asked them outright whether they still wanted to work together to build the SES, launched 10 years ago with no notable results, or preferred to continue going it alone.

In this latest attempt to breathe new life into a project which has struggled to produce the anticipated results (reductions in costs, delays, CO2 emissions), the Commission presented the SES 2+ package in July, *"to accommodate the current legislation for a faster development of the single sky"*. This initiative went down poorly with France and Germany, who felt that it was inappropriate.

In Vilnius, these delegations showed no signs of having changed their view, and were supported by others (Austria, Poland, Slovenia and Greece, amongst others). The French Minister Frédéric Cuvillier laid his cards on the table: *"It is my firm belief that we should not stop working to improve the single sky; quite the reverse. I simply believe that, for the most part, the basis we have to carry out this work is already there: this is the single sky package II (adopted in 2009) (...). I do not feel that this package has produced poor results, we just have to give it time"*. He concluded by saying that the *"construction of the harmonised single sky must be done by getting the countries on board, not by forcing them"*.

Indeed, most of the delegations would prefer to wait until the results of the creation of nine new functional airspace blocks (FABS), which were supposed to be in place in December of last year) make themselves felt. They are also reluctant to carry out an uncoupling of air navigation services and national monitoring authorities. Lithuanian Transport Minister, Rimantas Sinkevicius summed up the situation by telling the press that the ministers were *"cautious"* about the SES 2+ proposal, although *"the forthcoming developments of the single sky are a priority to all"*. He believes that *"it is important that this is done in a practical and pragmatic way"*.

Taken offguard by the member states' negative reactions to his proposal, Commissioner Kallas ended up wondering whether the 28 still want the Single European Sky, and whether putting an end to the current fragmentation is overly complicated at a political level. He said that it is not viable to pursue it without a genuinely European reform, but solely through national measures, as certain countries are calling for.

The aviation industry, which was present at the informal meeting of the ministers, supports the Commissioner. In Vilnius, the industry stood together to support the Commission's proposal, pressing for the anticipated benefits of the single European sky to be able finally to make themselves felt.

The debates will help the Lithuanian Presidency determine whether or not there is interest in starting work on the Single European Sky 2 + during its term in office. In the light of the lukewarm reaction of the ministers to the new package, the Presidency could play the *status quo* card. The Lithuanian minister has confirmed that a *"progress report"* will be put to the December Transport Council and that the dossier will be handed on to the Greek Presidency from 1 January to 30 June 2014. (MD/transl.fl)

**(AE) TRANSPORT: CABOTAGE – KALLAS GIVES ROAD TRANSPORTERS CLARIFICATION**

*Vilnius, 16/09/2013 (Agence Europe)* – Addressing the road transport industry (International Road Transport Union, IRU), the European Commissioner Siim Kallas confirmed new developments regarding cabotage between now and the end of the year. Preaching to the converted, he also called for the rapid adoption of his latest proposals on the revision of the weights and dimensions of lorries.

**Road freight market.** The commissioner, who was invited to the opening session of the IRU's conference on transport held in Vilnius on 15 September, in the wake of the informal meeting of the transport ministers (see other article), announced that he would present a report by the end of the year on the state of the road freight market. This may be accompanied by a proposal on *"how the rules can be implemented more effectively"*. He said that, so far, *"carriers cannot pick up a load where it is available, which makes the coming together of supply and demand complicated. Companies are artificially protected from competition on certain markets, by administrative barriers"*.

**Opening-up of the market.** The commissioner is therefore firmly of the opinion that the legislative framework needs to be improved and that the market has to open up more to cabotage, *"but this needs to be prepared for carefully"*. He repeated his denials that he intends to bring this about as a *"big bang"*. He spoke in favour of a long-term vision to *"create a road transport market without restrictions, and without distinctions"*.