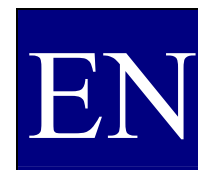




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



12773/04 (Presse 277)

PROVISIONAL VERSION

PRESS RELEASE

2607th Council Meeting

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

Brussels, 7 October 2004

President

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Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management
of the Netherlands

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12773/04 (Presse 277)

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Main Results of the Council

*The Council agreed on a general approach on **Driving licences and River Information Services** proposals.*

*On **GALILEO**, the Council adopted a mandate authorising the Commission to open negotiations with **Ukraine**, concerning the development of a civil global Navigation Satellite System.*

*The Council adopted in first reading the Regulation on cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of **consumer protection laws** and its common position on a draft Directive on **ship-source pollution** and on the introduction of **sanctions for infringements**.*

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the abovementioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Renaat LANDUYT

Minister for Transport

Czech Republic:

Mr Milan ŠIMONOVSKÝ

Minister for Transport

Denmark:

Mr Flemming HANSEN

Minister for Transport and Minister for Nordic Cooperation

Germany:

Mr Manfred STOLPE

Federal Minister for Transport, Building and Housing

Estonia:

Mr Andrus ANSIP

Minister for Economic Affairs and Communications

Greece:

Mr Mihail-Georgios LIAPIS

Minister for Transport and Communications

Spain:

Mr Fernando PALAO TABOADA

General Secretary, Ministry for Internal Development

France:

Mr Gilles de ROBIEN

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Planning, Tourism and the Sea

Ireland:

Mr Ivor CALLELY T.D.

Minister of State at the Department of Transport

Italy:

Mr Pietro LUNARDI

Mr Paolo UGGE'

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
State Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport

Cyprus:

Mr Harris THRASSOU

Minister for Communications and Works

Latvia:

Mr Vigo LEGZDIŅŠ

State Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communications

Lithuania:

Mr Alminas MAČIULIS

State Secretary at the Ministry of Transport

Luxembourg:

Mr Lucien LUX

Minister for Transport, Minister for the Environment

Hungary:

Mr Imre RÉTHY

Administrative State Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Transport

Malta:

Mr Jesmond MUGLIETT

Minister for Urban Development and Roads

Netherlands:

Ms Karla PEIJS

Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Ms Melanie SCHULTZ van HAEGEN-MAAS GEESTERANUS

State Secretary for Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Austria:

Mr Hubert GORBACH

Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology

Poland:

Mr Krzysztof OPAWSKI

Minister for Infrastructure

Portugal:

Mr Jorge BORREGO

State Secretary for Public Works, attached to the Minister for Public Works, Transport and Communications

Slovenia:

Mr Boris ŽIVEC

State Secretary for Transport, responsible for Transport Policy, International Relations and Railways

Slovakia:

Mr Pavol PROKOPOVIČ

Minister for Transport, Post and Telecommunications

Finland:

Ms Leena LUHTANEN

Minister for Transport and Communications

Sweden:

Ms Ulrica MESSING

Minister at the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, with responsibility for Infrastructure

United Kingdom:

Mr Tony McNULTY

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport

Commission:

Ms Loyola DE PALACIO

Vice-President

ITEMS DEBATED

CHARGING OF HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES - "EUROVIGNETTE"

The Council had an exhaustive debate on the proposal for a Directive on the charging of heavy good vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures. Delegations expressed differing views on some key aspects of the Presidency compromise proposal.

The Presidency concluded that, at this stage, it was impossible to reach agreement on the revision of the existing "Eurovignette" Directive.

RIVER INFORMATION SERVICES

Pending the adoption by the European Parliament of its first reading, the Council agreed on a general approach on the proposal for a Directive on harmonised River Information Services (RIS) on inland waterways in the Community.

The draft Directive is to provide a framework for the establishment and further development of harmonised RIS in the Community, with a view notably to enhancing the efficiency of inland waterway transport and to facilitating the interface with other transport modes.

RIS comprise services such as fairway information, traffic information, traffic management, calamity abatement support, information for transport management, statistics and customs services and waterway charges and port dues.

The Commission will have the task of defining technical guidelines and technical specifications for ensuring the implementation and interoperability of the River Information Services.

The Council introduced three main modifications into the original Commission's proposal. Firstly, more account is taken of work done by international organisations in the field of inland navigation. Secondly, the scope of the Directive has been made more precise, excluding small waterways and waterways that have no connection with a waterway of another Member State. Finally, the use of satellite positioning is recommended but not compulsory.

TRAIN CREWS

The Council took note of a Progress report presented by the Presidency on a draft Directive on the certification of train crews operating locomotives and trains on the Community's rail network (Third railway package). The Council decided to revisit this issue at its meeting in 9/10 December.

The Commission's proposal is aimed at improving the interoperability of train drivers and other key crew members, thus enabling railway undertakings to operate more flexibly and efficiently.

The draft Directive lays down the conditions and procedures for the certification of train crews operating locomotives and trains on the Community's rail network. It makes a distinction between a general licence pertaining to general skills and knowledge essential to the profession, and certificates which cover specialised knowledge regarding specific routes (infrastructure) and equipment (rolling stock).

DRIVING LICENCES

Pending the adoption by the European Parliament of its first reading, the Council agreed on a general approach on a proposal for a Directive on driving licences. This proposal is a recasting of Directive 91/439/EEC¹.

The three main objectives of this proposal are to improve the free movement of Community citizens, by ensuring and facilitating mutual recognition of all licences, reduce the possibilities for fraud and increase road safety.

The text agreed on by the Council provides for:

- only the plastic card driving licence model will be issued;
- possibility of introducing a microchip on the driving licences;
- introduction of limited administrative validity for all new licences issued from the date of application of the proposal;
- harmonisation of the periodicity of medical checks for professional drivers;
- introduction of a driving licence for mopeds;
- extension of the principle of progressive access to driving licences for the more powerful types of vehicles;
- introduction of minimum requirements for the initial qualification and periodic training of driving examiners;
- underpinning of the principle of the uniqueness of driving licence (one holder, one licence).

¹ Official Journal L237, 24.8.1991, p.1

GALILEO

– ***Overall state of play***

The Council was informed by Vice President of the Commission Loyola de Palacio on current developments concerning the European Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), in particular, on the outcome of the selection procedure for the future concerning holder carried out by the GALILEO Joint Undertaking and on the other conditions which have now been met and which will allow the Council to take a decision on the lawmaking of the future phases of the GALILEO programme in December 2004.

– ***Cooperation with Ukraine***

The Council adopted a Decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations with Ukraine with a view to establishing a cooperation Agreement concerning the development of a civil Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS).

The scenario of cooperation includes multilateral and industrial cooperation, research and scientific activities especially on standardisation issues, regional integrity monitoring and financial investment in GALILEO.

AVIATION - EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- a) Overall state of play*
- b) EU-US negotiations for an Air Transport Agreement*
- c) Euro-Mediterranean Aviation Agreement between with Morocco*
- d) European Common Aviation Area with Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia and Montenegro and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)*

On the basis of the information provided by Vice President of the Commission Loyola de Palacio, Ministers held an exchange of views over lunch, on the overall situation of external relations in the field of aviation, in particular on the approach that the Commission intended to follow in relations with different categories of third countries.

The Council was also informed by Commissioner Loyola de Palacio on the preparations underway for relaunching the negotiations once the United States administration is in place after the United States presidential elections.

Regarding these two points, the Presidency drew a number of conclusions underlining the need to involve stakeholders in the preparation of negotiations and looking forward to the resumption of an EU-US negotiation once the new US administration is in place.

On Morocco and Western Balkans new negotiating mandates proposed by the Commission, whilst reacting in a generally positive manner to these recommendations, the Council considered that more time was needed to finalise the detail of the texts in question.

The Council invited Coreper to continue the preparation of the texts with a view to allowing the Council to adopt these Decisions at a future Council session.

OTHER BUSINESS

– ***Road safety***

The Council took note of the information given by Mr Pietro Lunardi, Italian Minister for Transport, on the annual Ministerial Conference of Ministers for Transport of the European Union devoted to road safety, that will be held in Verona in 25-26 October. The meeting will be co-chaired by the Italian minister and the Dutch Presidency.

– ***Civil aviation***

The Commission expressed concerns about the work on the amended proposal for a Regulation amending Council Regulation 3922/91 on the harmonisation of technical requirements and administrative procedures in the field of civil aviation. This proposal is also known as the proposal for a Regulation on EU-OPS. The Commission noted that since the June Transport Council, the work on this proposal had stopped, although almost agreement had been reached at that stage. The Commission encouraged the Council to take up the work again with a view to achieving concrete results at the December Transport Council, and stated that it was ready to help where possible in order to find solutions for the problems outstanding.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

TRANSPORT

Ships - Pollution

The Council adopted a Common Position on a draft Directive on ship-source pollution and the introduction of sanctions for infringements (11964/04).

The main principle of the draft Directive is that all discharges of polluting substances are considered infringements if they are committed with intent, recklessly or by serious negligence. It provides the Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that these violations are subject to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions, which may include criminal or administrative sanctions.

The Common Position will be transmitted to the European Parliament for second reading under the codecision procedure.

Preparation of Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC)

The Council endorsed a Community position to be presented by the Presidency on behalf of the Member States at the MEPC meeting in London on 11 to 15 October 2004. This position concerns the accelerated phasing-in of double-hull or equivalent design requirements for single-hull oil tankers.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Cooperation on consumer protection *

The Council adopted a Regulation on cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws (3674/04 and 12619/04 ADD 1).

The Regulation provides a framework of mutual assistance for enforcement authorities to use when dealing with cross-border infringements and for administrative cooperation among the Member States and with the Commission on projects that are designed to inform, educate and empower consumers.

Following an agreement between the Council and the European Parliament in the framework of the codecision procedure, it has been possible to adopt the Regulation in first reading.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

External borders - Iceland and Norway

The Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations with Iceland and Norway as regards their participation in the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union.
