



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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INFORMATION NOTE

from: Presidency

to: Delegations

Subject: The informal Meeting of the EU Transport Ministers organized by the Lithuanian Presidency in Vilnius on 15 and 16 September on “Single European Sky. Delivering the future: Vision 20XX“

Delegations will find annexed a note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned subject.

**The informal Meeting of the EU Transport Ministers organized by the Lithuanian Presidency
in Vilnius on 15 and 16 September on
“Single European Sky. Delivering the future: Vision 20XX“**

The high-level debate was devoted to a discussion on the SES implementation with strong focus on the next steps to be taken. EU Transport Ministers as well as representatives of the industry outlined the achievements made towards SES implementation and the need to speed up the modernisation of the EU Air Traffic Management (ATM) and Air Navigation Services (ANS) and reiterated their political support for the Single European Sky.

The Presidency summarised the Member State's interventions as follows:

Assessment of the need for a Single European Sky and a revised institutional framework

The EU Transport Ministers expressed their support for the on-going reform of the air traffic management sector. Yet the Commission's plan to give further impetus to SES through the SES2+ proposal by rationalizing SES and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) regulatory frameworks received a mixed response. It was judged to be too ambitious and triggered open discussions on the future development of SES legislation.

Large number of Member States were of the opinion that further implementation of SES should be based on outcomes of the existing regulations thus giving adequate time for evaluation of the full potential of the reforms introduced by SES and SESII and existing instruments. The SES regulatory framework needs to be flexible, cost-efficient and take into account that “one size does not necessarily fit all”.

The representatives of Eurocontrol, EASA, IATA, AEA CANSO, as well as representatives of the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee, which had been invited to speak at the event, expressed their support for the SES2+ initiative.

Ministers confirmed that **Functional Airspace Blocks (FAB)** should be major elements in the EU Air Traffic Management landscape, supporting the proposal for more flexible and bottom-up FABs. Many Ministers considered that though performance results of FABs are still not as anticipated, it is clear that they are actually going to deliver tangible progress in the nearest future. The EU Transport Ministers pointed out that it is time to continue those important projects and start new ones from a bottom-up approach, based on the work already done, while exploiting synergies within the FABs or cross-FAB.

Some reserved positions were expressed when discussing a change towards a more integrated airspace for financial, social and sovereignty reasons, and the need for flexible local solutions was stressed. The changes implied by the regulatory framework for a regrouping of air traffic control areas within FABs along traffic flows may have significant impacts on the distribution of revenues of en-route charges, which calls for new solutions.

In this context several Member States also called for the formation of FABs on the basis of equally represented national interests, as well as equal participation in joint projects. To accelerate the further development of FABs, issues such as liability, interoperability, common charging and procurement models should be solved at EU level.

Ministers who addressed the institutional framework supported the Commission's proposals for a more rational division of work between EASA, Eurocontrol and the Commission as well as alignment of the SES and EASA regulations on basis of better regulation principles. Support was also expressed for the further development of the Network Manager.

Facilitating Industry participation to modernize and improve the level of service

The current SESII performance scheme has delivered some performance progress. The Presidency considers that air navigation service providers must continue their efforts to modernize ATM in order to achieve further gains over the next reference period 2015–2019, while securing resources for financing investments needed to support the deployment of SESAR. The performance targets have to be transparent, ambitious and realistic. In order to accelerate SES implementation, ambitious performance objectives, especially in the field of capacity and cost effectiveness should be established.

Concern was raised in the discussions, related to the proposed participation of Member States in the establishment of local performance targets. Strict European requirements or rules limiting Member State subsidiarity, for example in the areas of the Performance Scheme could hinder sovereign responsibilities. On the other hand several Ministers supported the idea of more tailored local targets, to better take into account local conditions and specificities.

Participants also discussed the **traffic forecast** impact in the Performance Scheme. Projections of long-term growth in European air traffic have repeatedly been changed, suggesting that a more informed approach to the outlook of European air traffic growth is needed.

The EU Transport Ministers stressed that the **SESAR technologies** would be key enablers in the organizational, systemic, structural and operational changes needed to achieve key objectives in the fields of safety, efficiency, environment and cost-efficiency. Since the start of its implementation, the SESAR has delivered noticeable results. The Presidency considers that implementation of ATM Centralised Services based on SESAR deliverables would improve competitiveness at a Pan-European basis. Some Member States also suggested that the SESAR program should be implemented before the creation of market conditions for the provision of the support services.

A progressive introduction of market mechanisms for **support services** considered by the European Commission was met with some concerns. The EU Transport Ministers stressed that the implementation of new business models under market conditions must ensure continuity and quality of services since safety continues to be paramount. Some support services, such as CNS, AIS or MET, are safety-critical since they enable ATS provision. The provision of these services is an obligation on States, which are parties to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. These services may also be used for military purposes, which give them a role in national security arrangements. It is important that the potential providers from outside the ATM/ANS sector must ensure an adequate level of competence, having regard to the new training and competence requirements related to the support personnel undertaking operational safety critical tasks, as introduced by the draft new EASA Regulation for ATM/ANS providers. Some delegations were concerned about separating some support services from air traffic services (ATS) and selecting support services' providers through standard public procurement procedures. Concerns were in particular raised about the ANS providers in small member States.

For many years **air navigation service** providers have looked for more cooperation, e.g. through joint investment or training. The need for such **integration** is increasing due to financial constraints in particular. If the pace of achievements has so far remained limited, it is, inter alia, because of the long depreciation times and dates for commissioning the current generation of systems. It is important to find more concrete opportunities to facilitate integration and innovation. SESAR will likely offer several such opportunities.

In summary, all the Member States supported the further implementation of the Single European Sky with a view to improving the competitiveness of the European air transport system and industry, contributing to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from aviation and ensuring faster and more convenient air travels. In addition, the Ministers agreed that striving for a modern regulatory and oversight framework, avoiding overregulation and burdening of the industry with unnecessary bureaucracy, should become an aim in implementing of the SES proposals. A majority of Ministers considered, however, that the Commission's proposal on SESII+ needs further refinement. Questions were raised by a number of Ministers in respect to the issue of support services in the Commission proposal: a need of more detailed justification in terms of some of its elements was highlighted. Ministers also stated that it is important to allow time for evaluation of the full potential of the reforms introduced by SES and SESII and existing instruments before making new proposals. On the other hand there was support for more flexible and bottom-up FABs, as well as a reform of the institutional landscape and simplification of the legal framework. A number of Ministers expressed their support for parts of the initiative, such as a more important role for the Network Manager and an improved process for customer input in the work of the air navigation service providers.

The Presidency concluded that more discussion and development is needed on various aspects of the proposal to reflect the discussions in this informal Meeting of the EU Transport Ministers.