



Briefing | EP TRAN - Visit of the Swedish Presidency

Dods - Committee Summary



01/02/2023

Source: European Parliament Committee on Transport (TRAN)

Subject: Visit of the Swedish Presidency

Date: 31 January 2022

Documents: [Agenda](#) (item 20)

On 31 January, the European Parliament TRAN Committee received a visit from the Swedish Presidency in the form of Andreas Carlson, Minister for Infrastructure and Housing, in charge of Transport. During the meeting, the minister stressed that the Swedish Presidency would focus on reaching a conclusion on transport files currently being discussed at Council level under the Fit for 55 package, such as fuel maritime and the ReFuelEU aviation initiative. MEPs who took the floor were supportive of the presidency's ambitious work agenda, which included also making progress in the area of the Single European Skies dossier. Calls were also heard about the importance of rolling out the TEN-T networks and for military mobility to be a key consideration in this regard. Please see below for a full summary of the discussion.

Chair Karima Delli (Greens/EFA, FR) noted that the details of the Presidency's programme would be discussed today. Given the attack on Ukraine, the transport market had been affected and the EU would need to and its fossil fuel dependence on Russia and quickly put in place the green transition. She asked for information on current transport fuels on the table at Council. The Chair hoped progress could be made on the single European sky and talks progress on the TEN-T network. Tourism had also been affected by the COVID crisis and this sector also needed assistance to get back off the ground.

Andreas Carlson, Minister for Infrastructure and Housing, in charge of Transport, remarked that the many challenges the EU were faced with were best tackled collectively, in close cooperation with the Parliament and the Commission. The security situation must be put at the forefront. The Union had come together and acted swiftly and jointly to support Ukraine. The war would continue to impact the EU energy and transport markets. Moreover, efforts must continue to drive economic growth. Europe's strength, resilience and global standing depended on industrial output, and this was heavily tied to the single market which continues to function well.

A further challenge was the need to deepen the single market and international trade needed to be further strengthened. The green transition must also be pursued: this would provide a great opportunity for European industry. Moreover, the EU was a Union of principles based on rule of law and individual rights and these values must also be protected.

The global climate challenge also required a global response and Europe must deliver in this area. In this regard, the EU needed to secure the supply of more fossil free electricity and the

EU must lead the way regarding the green transition. Transport must also be efficient in this regard and accessible to all.

Focus would be put on trilogues for transport files under the Fit for 55 package, including fuel maritime and ReFuelEU aviation, for example. The further development of the TEN-T network was also key to ensure more sustainability and the Presidency was ready to start negotiations when Parliament had finalised its positions. The ITS Directive could also increase road safety and the Presidency would try to progress on this file, as it would on negotiations on the revision of the single European sky (SES). In line with green objectives, the Commission was expected to put forward a number of proposals, such as a revision on driving licences and green transport and the Presidency would also work on these files.

A well-functioning transport sector was vital, including for improving access to non-EU regions and the Presidency was ready to start negotiations on improving the internal transport sector. The ReFuelEU maritime file would also boost alternative fuels and had a clear international dimension as similar work was also taking place at the IMO. Work would also be carried out on maritime accident instigation and other similar proposals to adopt to international requirements.

The Presidency would also hold several conferences in Sweden, such as a high-level event on accelerating electrification of transport. This would focus on both the sectors on energy and transport and would be held from 30-31 January. Transport ministers would be asked to discuss transport policy for a green and competitive future. The formal TTE transport Council would also soon be held on 1 June.

The tourism area was a broad field which also needed to be focused on. In 2019, this industry generated 9.5% of total EU GDP. Sustainable tourism could contribute to welfare, employment, integration and cultural understanding. During the pandemic, much of the tourism industry suffered. However, it had recovered well and the digital Covid certificate had contributed to this restart. Domestic tourism became more important and had continued to go and tele-working would create new working patterns. An increased demand in nature-based tourism had also been seen. People also increasingly valued safety and security in tourism.

Rising prices regarding food and energy would also affect the tourism sector negatively and all must work together to ensure the sector was made more resilient. Work on the regulation on short-term rentals would continue during the Presidency. Member States would be worked together to share best practices in light of the implementation of the European agenda for tourism 2030. The twin transition was also crucial for creating more sustainable tourism.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (EPP, RO) said there was a lot of work already on the table and the Commission would also be putting forward more files. He underlined the need for a balance to be struck between decarbonisation and competitiveness. He hoped the remaining files under Fit for 55 would reach a conclusion. These files must be aligned to reality in terms of their ambition. Aviation was currently under attack, and he hoped the file on ReFuelEU aviation would also progress. Finally, he called for Bulgaria and Romania to be allowed join the Schengen areas as this would be beneficial for transport.

Isabel García Muñoz (S&D, ES) shared the minister's ambition. The months ahead would be far from easy given the war in Ukraine. She hoped Fit for 55 would result in a reduction in emissions and a just transition. She asked for the Presidency's approach to a Co2 proposal on road emissions. She also hoped the Commission would soon put forward a revision on the

driving licence legislation as the lack of drivers in Europe was a serious issue. What would the Presidency's approach to this file be? Concerning the TEN-T revision, what needed to be focused on? Eurostat recently concluded that the amount of renewables in transport had gone down by 1.2%, though Sweden was in the lead with more than 30% being renewables. What could be learnt from Sweden in this regard?

José Ramón Bauzá Díaz (RE, ES) was glad to hear the ReFuelEU aviation file would be taken up by the Presidency. Transport and tourism were very intertwined, and he asked how the Presidency would ensure that tourism in outermost regions was kept a priority. He asked whether an agreement could be found on files under Fit for 55. How could the difficulties between Member States be overcome?

Ciarán Cuffe (Greens/EFA, IE), on the ReFuelEU aviation file, hoped compromise could be found. On the proposals due to be published by the Commission, which were viewed as priority. As for those stuck at Council, would the Presidency try to progress on any of these? He asked for a comment on the pending revision on the public service obligation guidelines.

Peter Lundgren (ECR, SE) remarked that one vision was to push electrification. However, the resources to build electric cars and factories meant 4.5 billion tonnes of copper were required. This was about as much as humanity had taken out of the ground in its entire history. 935 million tonnes of lithium were required and known reserves were only one-tenth of this amount. Cobalt, nickel and palladium were also areas where vastly more resources were required. Moreover, the electricity market had failed, and people were being asked to buy electric cars. He called on the Presidency to make sure the voice of reason came back to the fore.

Clare Daly (The Left, IE) noted she did not hear a whole lot about workers' rights. How did he see workers in a well-functioning internal aviation market? Currently, they did not have good rights. The French Presidency also said this was a priority and not much had been delivered. She asked for a comment on a progress report on the regulation of workers in the sector.

Minister Andreas Carlson, on reducing emissions under Fit for 55, reaching a deal was a priority for the Presidency. Reaching a conclusion on these files was ambitious, but realistic. The Swedish Presidency had already carried out a number of technical meetings. There were outstanding issues that agreement needed to be reached on, though he believed well-balanced compromises could be reached. Concerning the lack of labour in the transport sector, several approaches were required, one of which was to ensure a level playing field for businesses and social conditions for employees.

On coming proposals, a balance must be found regarding driving times, for example, so that specificities of a certain sector were taken into account. Regarding the SES, negotiations in this area had been going on for a while. There was still a big gap between the parties, though the Presidency would sound out where compromises could be achieved. Regarding the directive on driving licences, the Presidency's ambition was to improve and modernise the rules on this area. The age limit for 'b' driving licences could be changed by Member States, though this would have to be considered.

On ReFuelEU aviation, the ambition was to reach agreement between Council and the Parliament; the text must be ambitious yet realistic. The Presidency would not seek to advance certain files that had been stuck at Council for a long time. He stressed the need to set the bar high and have ambitious texts which could also be implemented. Industry was leading the way

and competitiveness and innovation must be supported. In the northern parts of Sweden, for example, new sites containing rare metals had been found.

Barbara Thaler (EPP, AT) voiced her concern that the TEN-T might end up as a patchwork and not a real network. How could this be avoided? On the renewable energy directive, prices also had to be kept low, though decarbonisation was required. How could it be ensured that transport was made more sustainable but also remained affordable for all?

Maria Grapini (S&D, RO) asked how the single market could be better developed to ensure there was better connectivity, especially as connectivity was not even across the EU. Concerning tourism, it had to be redeveloped. She asked if having some countries outside the Schengen zone was having a negative impact on transport.

Dominique Riquet (RE, FR) asked if the TEN-T network would really finally be European in nature. Would such trans-border projects be brought forward and considered crucial for Europe? He asked for a comment on technological neutrality.

Jakop Dalunde (Greens/EFA, SE), on TEN-Ts, he noted the idea was to facilitate a common European transport network. However, any decisions taken must be in Europe's interest and not only in the national interest. There was a lot of innovation going on in Sweden, such as green steel, and thus Sweden must be better connected. He questioned why Sweden was trying to withdraw the possibility for future Swedish governments to build rail lines with other EU countries.

Jörgen Warborn (EPP, SE) noted that many Swedish companies were at the forefront of cutting-edge innovation. However, small companies were feeling the effects of rising prices and were struggling to remain competitive. He asked what the Presidency would do to try and improve legislation in the transport sector.

Erik Bergqvist (S&D, SE) said he wanted to talk about security and the green transition. Regarding the TEN-Ts, there were key links missing regarding military mobility. Would military mobility and climate transition be priority areas for the Presidency? Concerning the ReFuelEU aviation file, would the aviation sector be able to deal with the green transition?

Elsi Katainen (RE, FI) noted that transport conditions were different in parts of northern Finland, with weather being particularly harsh there. Larger trucks were much more efficient per tonne where a modal shift was not possible and electrifying large trucks was very challenging. How should this be taken into account in terms of weights and proportions under legislation?

Dorien Rookmaker (ECR, NL) stressed that rail was playing a key role in Ukraine in terms of keeping their citizens safe. Rail was a social need and a strategic necessity. High speed rail provided a fast and efficient and safe mode of transport. Scandinavia could be connected to Berlin and Amsterdam, and she supported high speed rail connections between all EU capital cities. She asked for his thoughts on this.

Ljudmila Novak (EPP, SI) asked how the aviation sector could be made more sustainable. Airlines were continue sticking to the most profitable routes and there could be many issues when connecting flights were missed. As such, could internal flight markets be improved?

Inmaculada Rodríguez-Piñero (S&D, ES) agreed that infrastructure was vital for competitiveness. Cross-border bottlenecks must be addressed in this regard. On maritime transport, she was concerned about the situation for islands regarding the emission trading system regulation. Would islands with fewer inhabitants be penalised? What about carbon leakage?

Jan-Christoph Oetjen (RE, DE), on the SES, encouraged the Presidency to be ambitious as a lot of Co2 could be saved in this area. On ReFuelEUaviation, he called for an ambitious target that would mean national mandates were not required. Concerning buses and coaches and driving times, he asked there to be differentiation between the two. Regarding military mobility, this must be a central issue. Would the Presidency push for more investment in this area?

Chair Karima Delli (Greens/EFA, FR) said that transport represented 26% of emissions and thus was central to the green transition. She asked what was happening regarding the Brussels-Malmö night train. Another big issue was accessibility to transport, including in terms of price. How could transport be kept affordable? Would he reinvent European mobility? Would he follow the Commission's timetable or show innovation?

Minister Andreas Carlson said no one should doubt the level of ambition the Swedish Presidency had. That said, the Presidency would be reliant on the Commission putting certain proposals on the table. Concerning TEN-T, this would allow for bringing together regions and facilitating the internal market. It would also allow for a shift towards a common European system. The Presidency was ready to start trilogues once Parliament had adopted its position.

On the Swedish infrastructure situation, such questions must be put to the Swedish Parliament. The TEN-T network was a commitment to build what was established in the maps by 2040. The Swedish Government was now prioritising a different common TEN-T map than before. There were huge advantages to developing high speed rail in the EU, for both passenger and freight trains. However, these were expensive to build a comprehensive overview was needed when establishing priorities.

Regarding competitiveness, the Presidency would focus on this area. Regarding aviation, the Presidency would seek to ensure there was a functioning internal market to guarantee accessibility; the sector must also be made more sustainable and safety would be paramount. Aviation was faced with numerous challenges, such as how it would reduce its climate impact. Sweden would seek to ensure the EU showed ambition in this area on the global level. On Schengen, this fell under the remit of the Swedish Minister for Justice.

On the question of having longer heavy goods vehicles on the road, this could possibly be dealt with under the Swedish Presidency, though this would depend on when the Commission put the directive in this area forward. With regard to domestic aviation, the minister agreed on the need for this sector to be more sustainable and resilient. For driving times, it was important legislation took into account specificities and impact assessments would be considered in this regard. Legislation to facilitate train drivers' mobility would be positive. There were still some obstacles stopping inter-modal transport from working well. In this regard, TEN-T sought to increase intermodal integration across the whole transport train, for example, and the EU should concentrate its efforts on where it could bring about the most amount of added value.

Chair Karima Delli (Greens/EFA, FR) thanked the minister for coming to the Committee.