

Video conference of transport ministers 8 December 2020

Chair: Andreas Scheuer, German Federal Minister for Transport and Digital Infrastructure

The **meeting** will **start** at 10.00.

During this informal meeting, ministers will hold a **policy debate** on a proposal to revise the EU **road charging** directive (**Eurovignette**).

Ministers will also hold a policy debate on the Commission's proposals on the **Single European Sky**.

Under **any other business**, the presidency will brief ministers on a new mobility approach, the state of play of current rail transport proposals and the impact of COVID-19 on air passengers' rights.

The Luxembourg delegation will reiterate its demand for concerted investment in the extension of the European rail network; the Finnish delegation will brief ministers on a high-level meeting on connected and automated driving; and the Austrian delegation will provide information on the topic of socially responsible connectivity.

The Commission will brief ministers on crew changes in maritime transport in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The incoming Portuguese presidency will present its work programme for the first half of 2021.

All the agenda items will be livestreamed on the Council website.

Online **press briefing** ahead of the video conference: 3 December at 14.00

Online **press conference**: at the end of the meeting, +/-18.15.

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[Transport ministers' video conference webpage](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

Eurovignette

Ministers will hold an informal **policy debate** on a proposal to **revise EU road charging rules** (Eurovignette directive) to address issues relating to road infrastructure financing, congestion and environmental impact by reinforcing the 'polluter pays' and 'user pays' principles.

The aim of the discussion is to provide guidance to the presidency for further work on the compromise proposal that the presidency intends to submit to the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) as a draft negotiating mandate at a later stage.

According to the [presidency discussion paper](#), it currently appears that the following aspects still require further attention:

- the option (and not the obligation) for the member states to exempt vehicles with a technically permissible maximum laden mass exceeding 3.5 tonnes and less than 7.5 tonnes from the obligation to pay tolls or user charges under specific conditions
- the application of a mark-up to the infrastructure charge levied on specific road sections which are regularly congested

The presidency invites transport ministers to share their views on these two issues.

Background information:

Road charging is a national choice in the EU, and member states are free to introduce it on their territory or not.

The current Eurovignette directive lays down certain common rules to be followed by those member states that wish to levy such charges. These rules concern distance-based tolls and time-based user charges (vignettes) for heavy goods vehicles (above 3.5 tonnes) for the use of certain infrastructure. The idea is that the cost of constructing, operating and developing infrastructure can be levied through tolls and vignettes for road users.

In its proposal ([9672/17](#) + [ADD 1](#)) the Commission suggested phasing out time-based charging systems. It also proposed widening the scope of the directive to include buses and coaches, light commercial vehicles, and passenger cars.

The compromise proposals of successive presidencies have suggested maintaining time-based charging as a cost-effective alternative to distance-based charging. The compromises have taken into account the fact that member states differ in their geography and population density and in terms of the charging systems they already have in place.

The main new features compared to the Commission proposal which the Finnish, Croatian and German presidencies have worked on are keeping the charging system flexible and introducing a mandatory EU-wide tool which would vary infrastructure charges and user charges for heavy-duty vehicles on the basis of CO₂ emissions. This tool would replace the current system whereby charges vary according to Euro emission class. The new system would contribute to the internalisation of external costs, promote the entry into the market of less emitting vehicles and help combat climate change.

Procedure: The Commission presented the proposal in May 2017 as part of the first mobility package ([Europe on the move](#)). For it to be adopted, the text will need to be approved by both the Council and the European Parliament. The Parliament adopted its first-reading position on 25 October 2018.

[EU road charging](#) (background information)

[Travel and transportation during the coronavirus pandemic \(European Commission\)](#)

[Clean and sustainable mobility for a climate neutral EU \(background information\)](#)

Single European Sky

Ministers will hold an informal **policy debate** on the Commission's proposals on the **Single European Sky**. The aim of the debate is to guide further work on the proposals in the aviation working party.

The proposals under discussion are an amended proposal for the recast of the Single European Sky regulation (SES 2+) ([10840/20](#)) and a proposal for a regulation amending the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) basic regulation ([10841/20](#)). The aim of amending the EASA regulation is to entrust the EASA with the role of a performance review body with regard to the Single European Sky. The Commission adopted these proposals on 22 September 2020.

The Commission launched the [Single European Sky \(SES\) initiative](#) in 1999 to improve the performance of air traffic management (ATM) and air navigation services through better integration of European airspace. The last major legislative initiative within the SES framework, SES 2, was concluded in 2009.

The Commission proposed an interim update of the SES rules, called SES 2+, in 2013. The Council agreed on a partial general approach in December 2014. However, discussions on the file stalled afterwards.

In December 2019, in order to address the delays and congestion situation in 2018 and 2019, the Transport Council invited the Commission to reconsider its legislative proposal and to provide detailed information to justify new measures.

Although there has been a drastic reduction in traffic due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the key objectives of the European ATM system – safety, capacity, cost-efficiency and environment – remain valid today. Accordingly, the Commission identified the revision of SES 2+ as an enabler to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal. In addition, the crisis has shown that the EU ATM system should improve its resilience in order to better adjust to traffic developments.

For the video conference, the presidency has prepared a [discussion paper](#) with two **questions to structure the ministers' debate**:

- *Which elements of the proposals for an improvement of the current SES legal framework would you consider most appropriate to improve the performance of the European air traffic management system, to enhance its digitalisation and to contribute to achieving the goals of the European Green Deal?*
- *Which elements of the SES recast proposal should be dealt with as a matter of priority in order to accelerate the enhancement of the Single European Sky and what mechanisms are needed to ensure member states' sovereignty over their airspace and responsibilities under the Chicago Convention?*

Procedure: Before their final adoption, the texts will need to be approved by both the Council and the European Parliament.

[Questions and Answers – Single European Sky: for an efficient and sustainable air traffic management \(European Commission\)](#)

[Clean and sustainable mobility for a climate neutral EU \(background information\)](#)

Other business:

a) New mobility approach

Information from the presidency

b) Current rail transport proposals

[Information from the presidency on the state of play](#)

c) Call for massive investment in the extension of the European rail network

[Information from the Luxembourg delegation](#)

d) Impact of COVID-19 on air passengers rights

[Information from the presidency](#)

e) Crew changes in maritime transport

Information from the Commission

f) Towards socially responsible connectivity

Information from the Austrian delegation

g) 4th high-level meeting on connected and automated driving

(Helsinki, 7 October 2020)

[Information from the Finnish delegation](#)

h) Work programme of the incoming Portuguese presidency

Information from the Portuguese delegation
