

EIA received by the Vice-President of the European Commission, Siim Kallas

Brussels, September 30

An EIA delegation was received by the Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Transport, Mr Siim KALLAS. The intermodal group, chaired by Secretary General Peter Wolters, consisted of a selection of players in the port-hinterland range¹: a sea port terminal operator; an intermodal operator; a logistics service provider and a shipper as user of intermodal transport services. The Commissioner was accompanied by two members of his cabinet among which the cabinet chef.

A broad range of topics linking business requirements with policy measures were dealt with during intense discussions, all of them handled by Commissioner KALLAS with a remarkable pragmatism, while it was clear that the cabinet was open for and in need of mode-overlapping intermodal solutions.

A central issue was the need for consistency of legislation, among which harmonisation of legal requirements on weights, dimensions and load securing while crossing borders of member states. Transport business and therefore trade is suffering if rapid and flawless performance of the entire supply chain is disrupted. The cabinet pledged the delegation to organise a survey highlighting inconsistencies in legislations first, before seriously considering relevant measures.

All participants raised concerns in relation to the infrastructure already being fully exploited while asking for measures to preserve capacity in supporting maritime port-hinterland and continental distribution as part of competitive global supply chains, including a coherent terminal master plan between member states. The EIA made a concrete proposal which instrument the EC could use for coordinating port-hinterland and terminal investments between member states, which the Commissioner embraced to investigate.

However, the specific challenge of increasing rail slot capacity still appears to be unsolved for the coming period, despite earlier proposals of the Commissioner. The EU Treaty does not allow him to intervene drastically on the Member States (e.g. Germany) in this specific field. Finally, the high variations of rail traction cost levels between infrastructure providers was matter of discussion.

Regarding the Marco Polo programme for start-up operations and the risk of market distortion, the delegation was pleased to learn that the Commissioners' cabinet is open for adjusting the entire programme and evaluation procedures in due time, responding to certain market practices not in line with the original 'spirit' to shift cargo from road to alternative modes in a transparent way. One of the delegation members proposed a creative solution to invest the MP funds differently by lowering the cost of (e.g. railway) networks.

The introduction on a wider scale of the European 45' pallet wide container as "green" co-modal solution avoiding road congestion while decreasing gasoil consumption and therefore the CO₂ emissions was proposed by a delegation member. The Commissioner reacted by elaborating on possible actions related to the present Directive 96/53 on weight and dimension of commercial vehicles.

Interoperability and ICT resembling measures required to streamline digital freight processes was raised from the side of the Commissioners' cabinet. The EIA replied that indeed, supply chain management and logistics is a global issue which requires global, mode- and system neutral interoperable platform solutions.

As a concrete example, EIA referred to the logistics industry driven [SMART-CM](#) (Smart Container Chain Management) initiative, endorsed by EU and Chinese customs, which recently succeeded in providing a 'Single Window' approach in line with the European AEOⁱⁱ and Green Laneⁱⁱⁱ concept. DG MOVE was proposed to stimulate any kind of innovative projects in this e-freight direction in close contact with other DG's such as Research & Innovation, TAXUD, Enterprise and Environment.

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ⁱ Additional rail contribution received by email 'Agenda 2015 for Combined Transport in Europe'

ⁱⁱ Regulation (EC) 648/2005) - Community Customs Code

ⁱⁱⁱ {COM(2006)79 final} - Enhancing supply chain security