

Transport white paper

Oil dependency to be reduced to 40-50% by 2050

By Isabelle Smets | Friday 14 January 2011

The future white paper on the Common Transport Policy could set a target to reduce the transport sector's CO₂ emissions by 50% to 70% by 2050. An intermediary target for 2030 could also be inserted into the document, to be presented by the European Commission over the coming months. This is what was stated by Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas in a letter dated December 2010 to the chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Transport (TRAN), Brian Simpson (S&D, UK), to "share his present thinking" on the future white paper. This eight-page letter, which *Europolitics* was able to obtain (see link below), also announces targets to reduce the transport sector's dependence on oil: the Commission estimates that this dependence must not exceed 40-50% by 2050, compared with 96% today. To achieve this, it wants to ensure that city transport is completely carbon-free by 2050 and that rail and inland waterways take most inland freight on distances greater than 300 kilometres and a majority of medium-distance passenger traffic between 300 km and 1,000 km (depending on the availability of high speed vehicles). It should be noted that these targets could be fine-tuned before the publication of the white paper because impact studies and work on establishing a model are still underway within the Commission.

"European transport is at a crossroads," said the commissioner, who considers that "substantial changes" will be difficult and will take time to implement, but are nevertheless "essential". The future white paper intends to establish a path towards alternative energy sources. "It is our duty to give governments, manufacturers and industry the clarity they need to plan investments and a policy for the decades to come," said Kallas.

The letter insists on the need to "change our concepts of mobility". Switching from one mode of transport to another will be as easy as pie thanks to applications facilitating intermodality (information on connections, planning, tickets via the internet and mobile phones). The same goes for the transport of goods, with the end of the paper trail and electronic customs by 2020, and one stop shops for freight transport within the EU. Public procurement rules will encourage the purchase of 'green' vehicles, in the same way that fiscal policies will favour decarbonation.

The Commission will also attempt to set up an environment that is more favourable to public-private partnerships for the financing of transport infrastructure. In future, pricing policy for road infrastructure could concern not just transport businesses but also private cars.

Commissioner Kallas's letter is available at www.europolitics.info > Search = 286349