



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**Siim Kallas**

Vice-President and Commissioner for Transport

## **Eastern Partnership informal transport dialogue**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Tbilisi, Georgia

**13 February 2013**

One and a half years ago Transport Ministers launched work in Krakow, Poland to become better connected and more closely integrated through transport. Many steps have been made, but efforts are still needed to achieve concrete results.

In autumn, EU and Eastern Partnership Transport Ministers will meet for the second time at an event planned by the future Lithuanian EU Presidency.

The initiative of Georgia to host today's informal transport dialogue comes timely. It is a chance to check that we are moving in the right direction.

Transport drives growth and creates employment. EU's single market has 500 million consumers. The European Union wants to see its Eastern neighbours closely associated to its Single Market. Economic benefits from future closer trade ties can only be grasped if there are good transport connections to support trade.

We offer our closest neighbours to be part of a wider European transport area.

Firstly, this would be an area, where everyone operate following the same rules.

The European Union has put in place rules that guarantee fair treatment of citizens and businesses. Same rules and standards on the transport market ensure that citizens were safe, workers' rights were protected and harmful effects of transport activity to the environment was minimised. To ensure a global level-playing field for everyone, we encourage also our partner countries to follow the same rules and standards in transport.

In closer transport market integration, we look at all transport modes.

Business, people-to-people and tourism contacts can grow stronger through more and cheaper flights between the EU and the partner countries. We have already signed air transport agreements with Georgia and Moldova. We launched negotiations on a similar agreement with Azerbaijan in January. Negotiations are on-going with Ukraine and we hope to conclude the talks soon. We are ready to start negotiations with other partner countries based on their interest.

Through those agreements, we liberalise our aviation markets and gradually integrate neighbouring countries as full partners in the EU's common aviation area.

Rail has a vital role in managing rising traffic demand between the EU and the partner countries. To make an even better use of rail transport, we are looking at ways to make our rail systems work better with each other in a safe and efficient manner. For example, we invite the neighbouring countries to implement the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).

With some partner countries we border the same sea. To save time in moving goods, it is important that systems in our ports can talk to each other. We can make sure that the sea is safe and clean when our respective systems that monitor traffic are able to smoothly exchange info.

The European Union attaches great importance to safety on roads. As considerable number of passengers and high volumes of freight is carried by road, we are interested in cooperating with the partner countries to introduce high safety standards.

Secondly, in developing a wider European transport area, I would also underline the need for proper infrastructure connections.

It is important that our roads and railways are joined up since a well-functioning transport network is the back-bone of the supply chain.

27 EU countries have agreed to complete the trans-European transport network in two layers – core and comprehensive. Since transport has the habit of not stopping at

borders we seek to agree with our closest neighbours on priority connections and endorse the Eastern Partnership transport network later this autumn.

I hope work on defining how our networks can be best joined up will be finalised soon. Eastern Partnership transport network will show how the trans-European transport network can be best connected with key infrastructure in the neighbouring countries.

Completing the network will require implementing a number of infrastructure projects. We can offer technical assistance to prepare good interconnection projects and we work with the European Financial Institutions to leverage financing. In autumn, we could agree to work on concrete priority projects on border crossings and on the Eastern Partnership transport network.

Looking ahead towards the ministerial meeting later this year, those are my ideas on areas we could be working in the coming months and on results that we could endorse.

Our role in the EU services is to be a facilitator. We offer the Eastern Partnership Transport Panel, which we established in Krakow, as a forum for exchange of information and best practices. We have put at your disposal technical assistance to drive key reforms in the transport sector.