

# Airspace High on EU's Radar

Transport Commissioner to Target Countries Falling Short of Air-Traffic Control Goals

By DANIEL MICHAELS

BRUSSELS—In an unusually blunt attack, European Union Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas on Friday will name and shame countries that are failing to meet targets for fixing the bloc's snarled air-traffic system, according to EU documents.

The progress report "set alarm bells ringing" that the EU won't be able to achieve promised savings of more than €1.2 billion (\$1.6 billion) by 2014 and complete by 2030 its integration plan, known as the Single European Sky, according to documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Only five of the EU's 27 members are on track to hit their goals for cutting costs and boosting capacity, the documents say.

Of these, only two—Denmark and Lithuania—meet all criteria, according to people familiar with details of the analysis.

Countries furthest from their targets include Britain, France, Germany and Spain, according to the documents.

Spokesmen for the U.K. Civil Aviation Authority and France's Directorate General of Civil Aviation declined to comment on the EU report. Spokespeople at agencies in Germany and Spain didn't reply to requests for comment.

Mr. Kallas plans to warn EU countries that they "will need to do more" to achieve the agreed savings. Governments aren't sufficiently monitoring their air-traffic agencies or linking their systems across borders, the documents say.

If governments fail to meet their targets, the EU's executive body, the European Commission, could "take corrective measures," the documents say. The nature of those measures and the Commission's ability to compel national action remains unclear, according to European aviation officials.

National air-traffic agencies say they are working hard to integrate and boost efficiency. "We have tried as hard as we could and are not so far off the target," said Günter Martis, director of European affairs at the Civil Air Navigation Services Organization, a trade group of air-traffic agencies. "We are fully prepared to contribute as much as we can, but must consider the limits to which we are bound."

Those limits include strikes by traffic controllers, who say the Sin-



gle Sky plan will compromise safety by forcing them to work more.

Airlines, which suffer from Europe's disorganized air-traffic system, endorse Mr. Kallas's hard line. "The economic crisis makes the inefficiencies of the air traffic system particularly outrageous," said Sylviane Lust, director-general of the International Air Carrier Association, a trade group. "We fully support the Commission and would like it to stand firm."

The Single Sky project has been debated for more than a decade and officially kicks off in January. It seeks to convert Europe's patchwork of impractically small national air-traffic operations into a seamless whole and thereby cut costs while boosting capacity. Today, airplanes zigzag across Europe on routes that add expense, time and greenhouse gas emissions.

Efforts to integrate European skies have met resistance from national air-traffic agencies, which worry about controller strikes and fear the loss of power in a pan-European system. Armed forces also fear losing control over national airspace for maneuvers.

Airlines and some environmental advocates argue the efficiency goals should be more ambitious.

Under the Single Sky plan, 31 na-



European Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas in May.

tional air-traffic agencies are being grouped into nine "functional airspace blocks" by the end of next year and planners hope the consolidation will achieve economies of scale. But establishment of the blocks is lagging and the national systems suffer "a considerable lack of interoperability...leading to higher costs," the EU documents say.

The Single Sky program begins an initial three-year phase on Jan. 1, during which EU countries have pledged to cut more than €1.2 bil-

lion from projected air-traffic fees of roughly €19 billion during the period. Each government must contribute part of the total, but dividing up the amount among agencies with extremely different systems and standards has been difficult.

Mr. Martis at CANSO said the initial three years "will be a kind of test phase and real achievements will come with the second period."

Airlines say that can't wait that long. "We need something much more radical," said Ms. Lust at IACA.