Charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of infrastructure: differentiated charging

2008/0147(COD) - 08/07/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to amend Directive 1999/62/EC ("Eurovignette") on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: transport plays a crucial role in the economy and society but it relies heavily on oil and its use produces costs on society. With the exception of climate change, most of the external costs are borne by the population and the local or national governments of the territory where transport takes place and not where the vehicle is registered, nor where the vehicle is refuelled. In order to move towards a sustainable transport policy, transport prices should better reflect the costs related to traffic-based air pollution, traffic-based noise pollution, climate change and congestion caused by the actual use of vehicles, trains, planes or ships as a means of optimising the use of infrastructure, reducing local pollution, managing congestion and fighting against climate change at least cost for the economy. In the road transport sector, **tolls** being distance based charges for the use of infrastructure constitute a fair and efficient economic instrument to achieve this objective.

In 2006, the European Parliament and the Council called on the Commission to draw up a report on a generally applicable, transparent and comprehensible model for assessing the external costs of transport, such as pollution and congestion, to serve as the basis for calculating infrastructure user charges. The Commission was asked to propose a strategy for stepwise implementation of the model for all transport modes, accompanied if appropriate by a proposal for revising Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of infrastructure. More recently, in its resolution of 11 March 2008 on sustainable European transport policy, Parliament urged the Commission to come up with such a model, a strategy for implementing it in all modes, and legislative proposals starting with a review of the Directive.

CONTENT: this proposal is part of an **overall package** which also comprises a strategy on the internalisation of external costs of transport as well as a communication on the reduction of noise from railways. Its objectives are to encourage Member States to implement differentiated charging to improve the efficiency and environmental performance of road freight transport. The main elements of the proposal are as follows:

- the proposed Directive enables Member States to **integrate in tolls levied on heavy goods vehicles an amount which reflects the cost of air pollution and noise pollution caused by traffic**. During peak periods, it also allows tolls to be calculated on the basis of the cost of congestion imposed upon other vehicles. The amounts will vary with the travelled distance, location and time of use of roads to better reflect these external costs. The proceeds will have to be used by Member States for making transport more sustainable through projects such as research and development on cleaner and more energy efficient vehicles, mitigating the effect of road transport pollution or providing alternative infrastructure capacity for users;

- Member States which opt for it must **respect common charging principles** together with **mechanisms for notifying and reporting tolling schemes** to the Commission. Member States must designate independent authorities to set the chargeable costs by using a common method which can be easily monitored and adapted to scientific progress. This will ensure that charging schemes are transparent, proportional to the objective pursued and do not discriminate against the nationality of hauliers;

- the charge must be collected through **electronic systems** which does not create hindrance to the free flow of traffic and local nuisance at tollbooths, and which can be extended to other part of the network at a later stage without significant additional investments. A transition period for the current systems with barriers is planned. To avoid undue charging of users, other conditions must be met when a charge based on the costs of congestion and pollution is combined with a charge to recover the cost of infrastructure;

- the proposal extends the scope of the current Directive **beyond the trans-European network** to avoid inconsistent pricing schemes between major corridors and other interurban roads. It makes more practicable the provisions in the current Directive on the mark-up levied in mountainous areas to co-finance EU labelled priority projects;

- lastly, it does not prevent Member States from applying on **urban roads** regulatory charges specifically designed to reduce traffic congestion or combat environmental impacts in built up areas.