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

2008/0147(COD) - 11/03/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 359 votes to 256, with 86 abstentions, a legislative resolution amending, under the first reading of the codecision procedure, the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures.

The main amendments are as follows:

Extension of the rules to all main axes: according to the Parliament, the directive should permit the free movement of goods in the Union while guaranteeing equal treatment of carriers. It is therefore appropriate to apply it throughout the trans-European transport network and on all the roads customarily used for international goods transport.

Congestion charging: the text as adopted by Parliament in plenary left unchanged the provisions of the Commission proposal which allowed for the external cost charge for lorries to include the cost of congestion on busy roads during peak periods. However, Parliament did decide to delete from Annex IIIa the specific methods for calculating the cost of congestion, thereby leaving it up to the Member States to decide which methods to use. In confirming the Commission proposal on the congestion charge for lorries, therefore, the plenary did not follow the position set out in the report tabled by the Committee on Transport, which, in a bid to avoid penalising lorries, would have allowed Member States to apply a congestion charge to lorries provided they applied a similar charge to "all other road users". Lastly, an amendment tabled by the Greens/EFA Group seeking to add **CO2** to the list of chargeable costs was also rejected in plenary.

User charges: the proposed directive provides that user charges shall be in proportion to the duration of the use made of the infrastructure and shall be available for the duration of a day, week, month and a year. MEPs consider that the monthly rate shall be no more than 10% of the annual rate and the weekly rate shall be no more than 2.7% of the annual rate. In order to avoid discrimination within the EU, MEPs also deleted a proposal that provided that a Member State may only apply annual rates for vehicles registered in that Member State.

Conurbations: the proposal provides that, in exceptional cases concerning infrastructure in mountainous regions, a mark-up may be added to the infrastructure charge levied on specific road sections which are subject to acute congestion. MEPs consider that conurbations may also be concerned by congestion, which may justify a mark-up to the charge. In general, MEPs propose that Member States should be able to use the revenues for the improvement of transport infrastructure in general, according to their own priorities.

Charges for use: charges for use shall not apply to vehicles complying in advance with future EURO emissions standards as regards the dates laid down in the relevant rules.

Informing the European Parliament: since the purpose of the proposed directive is to introduce the internalisation of external costs, the information provided to the Commission by Member States of where and how these are calculated should be made available to the European Parliament.

Non-regular users: the arrangements for collecting tolls and user charges shall not, financially or otherwise, place non-regular users of the road network at an unjustified disadvantage compared to those who use alternative forms of payment.

Earmarking revenues: the Parliament intends to reinforce the concept of earmarking. Therefore, a Member State in which an external cost charge is levied shall ensure that the revenue generated by the charge is earmarked as a priority to reduce and, where possible, eliminate the external costs arising from road transport. The revenue may also be used for measures aimed at improving CO2 and energy performance of road transport vehicles, and developing and improving existing road infrastructure or developing alternative infrastructure for transport users.

As from 2011, at least 15% of the revenues generated by external costs and infrastructure charges in each Member State shall be dedicated to **financially supporting TEN-T projects** in order to increase transport sustainability. This percentage shall gradually increase over time.

Galileo: as soon as the operability of toll collecting services based on the Galileo satellite positioning system is technically worked out, external cost charges shall be levied and collected by an interoperable European electronic toll collecting system as specified in Directive 2004/52/EC.

Report on tolls collected by Member States: the Parliament calls on the Commission to present, no later than 31 December 2010, the Commission a report on the availability of safe and secured parking places on the Trans-European Road Network (TERN). After involving the relevant social partners, this report shall be accompanied by proposals on:

- earmarking of infrastructure charges for a sufficient number of safe and secured parking areas on the TERN;
- guidelines for the European Investment Bank, the Cohesion Fund and the Structural Funds for due consideration of safe and secure parking areas within the design and co-financing of TERN-projects.

Report on the results of the directive: the report to be presented by the Commission by 31 December 2013 should also examine:

- the technical and economic feasibility of gradually abolishing time-based charging systems and introducing distance-based systems and the need to maintain a derogation for Member States with external borders with third countries to continue to apply time-based charging systems to heavy goods vehicles queuing at border-crossing points;
- the need for a proposal for a scheme to ensure the consistent and simultaneous internalisation of external costs for all other modes of transport.

The report shall be accompanied by an assessment of the progress of the internalisation of external costs for all modes of transport and by a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council for further revision of the directive.

Internalisation of external costs: the resolution stresses that the principle of internalising external costs is the equivalent of a management instrument and should encourage road users and the related industrial sectors to exploit and expand their respective capabilities in the area of environmentally-friendly transport, for example by means of changes in driving behaviour or further technological development.

Calculating external costs: in order to ensure that European road hauliers receive clear price signals, which act as an incentive to optimise their behaviour, MEPs stress that efforts should be made in the medium term to bring about convergence in the methods which all European charging systems use to calculate external costs.

Interoperability of toll systems: MEPs stress that interoperability of the toll systems in the Community should be achieved as quickly as possible. Efforts should be made to limit the number of devices in the vehicle to one, which makes it possible to apply the various rates which are in force in the various Member States. The Commission should take all necessary measures to ensure the rapid introduction of a truly interoperable system by the end of 2010.