

# Charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures

2017/0114(COD) - 17/02/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading

The European Parliament approved the Council's position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending directives 1999/62/EC, 1999/37/EC and (EU) 2019/520 on the charging of vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures.

The proposed directive revises Directive 1999/62/EC (Eurovignette) on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures in order to:

- strengthen the application of the 'user pays' and 'polluter pays' principles;
- properly contribute to the financing of road infrastructure;
- address congestion;
- boost transport decarbonisation; and
- contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and to the EU's climate objectives by reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from road transport.

The main elements of the Council's position are as follows:

## *General charging principles*

The Directive provided that - vehicles - be they light - or heavy-duty vehicles or vehicle types within such categories - can be charged independently from each other. Nevertheless, where passenger cars are charged, light commercial vehicles have to be also charged at an equal level or higher.

Member States can decide to maintain the status quo of existing concession contracts, while not applying the new charging rules until the contract has been renewed or the tolling or charging arrangement has been substantially amended.

Member States can provide for reduced tolls or user charges or exemptions from the obligation to pay tolls or user charges in specific cases (e.g. for zero emission vehicles with a technically permissible maximum laden mass up to 4.25 tonnes).

**The user charges for heavy-duty vehicles** will be phased out on the core TEN-T network within eight years of the entry into force of the directive. As a derogation from the general principle of phasing-out, exemptions are allowed in duly justified cases, after notifying the scheme to the Commission.

Two review clauses should allow the Commission to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the directive with regard to the charging of light-duty vehicles as well as the technical and legal feasibility of differentiating the treatment of light commercial vehicles.

## *Combined charging system*

The amended Directive provides that Member States applying tolls on their core TEN-T network or on part of it before the entry into force of the directive, can establish a combined charging system for all heavy-duty vehicles or for some types of heavy-duty vehicles. Within that system, the user charges have to be varied according to the vehicle's CO2 emissions and Euro emission class.

Additionally, according to this provision, the use of the infrastructure also has to be made available for **a day**, and for a week or ten days or both. Nevertheless, the Member States may limit the daily user charge for transit purposes only.

### *Internalising external costs for heavy-duty vehicles*

The new rules now make **external-cost charging for air pollution mandatory**, after a four-year transition period, where tolls are applied. Nevertheless, the Member States will be able not to apply the external-cost charge for air pollution, in case of unintended consequences involving the diversion of traffic, after notifying the Commission. This mandatory charging is without prejudice to the choice of the Member States to apply an external-cost charge for CO2 emissions anyway. Nevertheless, the Commission will be allowed to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of external-cost charging for CO2 emissions.

### *Optional application of charges*

The Directive now provides that the revenues generated from (optional) congestion charges, or their equivalent in financial value, will be used to **address the congestion problem**, or to develop sustainable modes of transport and mobility in general.

### *Variations based CO2 emissions and environmental performance of vehicles*

A new provision introduces CO2 to the list of chargeable costs, in line with climate objectives. This provision requires Member States to vary infrastructure and user charges for heavy-duty vehicles based on CO2 emissions. Initially, the scheme should only apply to the largest trucks, but it would be gradually extended to other types of heavy goods vehicles and regularly adapted to technological progress.

Member States will also be able to give preferential treatment to zero-emission vehicles. The new provision nevertheless includes safeguards to avoid double rewarding of hybrid vehicles and possible overlaps with other carbon-pricing instruments.

The text now leaves discretion to the Member States when it comes to differentiating tolls and user charges for light-duty vehicles according to the environmental performance of the vehicle. Nevertheless, this provision requires mandatory variation of tolls and the annual rate of the user charges for **vans and minibuses**, according to the environmental performance of the vehicle, as of 2026, where tolls or user charges are applied and where technically practicable.

Lastly, the Directive provides for the introduction of a **review and sunset clause** in case road transport is included in a future carbon pricing mechanism, in order to avoid double pricing.