

Road transport: the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures, Eurovignette

1996/0182(COD) - 15/07/1997

While welcoming the emphasis placed on external costs by Parliament, Commissioner Kinnock said that the Commission had proposed, in the directive, the possibility – but not the obligation – for Member States to add a modest external-cost element. As a result, he rejected Amendments Nos 9 and 17. Amendments Nos 14, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22, on the provisions of the original proposal on ‘sensitive routes’, were also rejected. Mr Kinnock could also not accept Amendment No 7 on the concept of sensitive areas which was too vague as the whole world could fall within this concept. On the other hand, he accepted Amendment No 3 calling for a reference to the Alpine Convention. Amendments Nos 5, 11, 12 and 13 were also accepted. However, Mr Kinnock rejected Amendment No 6 providing for an open-ended rather than a time-limited derogation for minimum taxes and No 1 on external costs. In this respect, the Commissioner said that the amendment in question could not be accepted partly because it would restrict the application of external cost principles to road transport only. The Commissioner also did not agree with the content of Amendment No 24, which aimed to simplify the structure of minimum vehicle taxes. As for user charges, he accepted Amendment No 9, calling for differentiated user charge rates during rush hours and night-time, and Amendment No 15, proposing a 50% reduction in rates for vehicles from peripheral regions, which was time-limited. With regard to levels of user charges and their structure, the Commissioner stressed that the maximum annual levels proposed in Amendment No 26, ranging between ECU 1 000 and 2 500, were too high. Finally, Mr Kinnock confirmed the validity of the system for classifying vehicles into three categories, according to their capacity to cause damage to infrastructures, and therefore rejected the other system proposed in Amendments Nos 16 to 25. He also rejected Amendments Nos 27 to 42, which had also been rejected by the Committee on Transport.