

Road transport: ecopoints for heavy vehicles transiting through Austria for 2004

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The Presidency concluded, after a discussion on the draft Regulation, that a qualified majority of delegations was in favour of a compromise proposal suggested by the Presidency, and that when the Parliament has given its opinion in first reading, the Council would adopt a common position on this basis. The Belgian, Italian, Dutch and Austrian delegations indicated that they were unable to support the Presidency's suggested compromise. The Presidency compromise is aimed at resolving the problems raised by Alpine transit, taking account both of sensitive environmental concerns and of the basic principle of free circulation in the internal market. It comes in response to the request made by the European Council at Copenhagen to adopt before the end of 2002 a Regulation providing an interim solution for the 2004-2006 period. The Presidency compromise comprises the draft Regulation establishing the transitional system to minimise environmental damage resulting from Alpine transit, pending the establishment of a Community framework for the charging for the use of infrastructure, as well as draft declarations by the Council and the Commission, which note in particular that: - Austria, Italy and Germany have agreed on an action plan on the promotion of combined transport for the transit of goods through Austria in the short term; - Austria confirms that it will speed up plans for a Brenner railway tunnel (Brenner Basis tunnel) with the aim of completing it by 2012; - the Council and the Commission will make every effort to enable the adoption of a Directive establishing a Community framework on the pricing of infrastructure, on the basis of the current "Eurovignette" Directive (Directive 99/62/EC). The Commission confirms its intention to present a proposal to this effect no later than the first semester of 2003.