

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

1996/0182(COD) - 18/01/1999 - Council position

The Council common position incorporates 6 of the European Parliament's amendments already accepted by the Commission and introduced in its amended proposal. The main result of the incorporation of these amendments is that there is no upper limit for vehicle taxes, which have to be above the minimum levels in the directive, irrespective of whether a user charge system is in operation or not. Also, on the basis of a specific provision, Greece can be granted temporarily a 50% reduction in the user charges. The common position departs from the amended proposal in a number of areas: - the Council did not follow the Commission with regard to the concepts of external costs and sensitive routes and all provisions and references to those concepts have been left out of the common position; - the Council did not follow either the Commission or the European Parliament with respect to the differentiation of vehicle taxes according to emission (EURO) categories of vehicles. It has therefore maintained the same minimum rates of vehicle taxes as in Directive 93/89/EEC; - with respect to user charges, the common position is closer to Parliament's opinion than to the Commission's in that it contains a differentiation of minimum rates by two axle classes and three vehicle emission classes. However, the maximum user charge rates in the common position are lower than those proposed by either Parliament or the Commission. The Council has introduced new provisions in the following areas: - with regard to the legal basis of the directive: the Council added article 99 of the EC Treaty because of the fiscal nature of the provisions in Chapter II of the directive on annual vehicle taxes; - concerning tolls, the common position introduces the possibility of differentiating rates according to the emission classes of the vehicle and the time of day when the infrastructure is used; - with respect to user charges, a special provision has been introduced in the common position allowing Austria to apply a toll on the motorway section between Kufstein and Brenner in a way that complies with the general conditions of application of user charges in the directive.