Charging for transport infrastructure

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Paolo COSTA (ELDR, I) on transport infrastructure charging. The basic premise of the report was the need for transport users to pay for the quantifiable components of transport costs arising from the use, the quality and the safety of infrastructure and for all users to be charged for transport infrastructure costs to which they give rise. The committee felt that a comprehensive system of transport infrastructure charging should be based on cost estimates as accurately as possible and that this was an issue which needed further analysis. The new charging system must avoid a net increase in taxation in the economy as a whole and must also be aimed at phasing out distortions of competition between Member States and thus creating fair conditions for transport operators. The Commission was urged to devise a general methodology, to be phased in gradually, to make this new approach to transport charging easily understandable and attractive to users and the public. Such methodology should move in the direction of environmental sustainability, whilst preserving the right to mobility of all citizens. The committee pointed out that exemptions could be made from charging users, with consequent recourse to general taxation, in cases where there were social benefits, for example to tackle problems in outlying areas or to prevent social exclusion. Lastly, it stressed that the viability of mechanisms for transferring resources towards more environmentally sustainable transport sectors depended crucially on the existence of a level playing field for transport modes with viable alternatives for users.