Trans-European transport network: electronic road toll systems, widespread introduction and interoperability

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The committee adopted the report by Renate SOMMER (EPP-ED, D) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure: - a European electronic toll system should be introduced on or after 1 January 2007 at the earliest and not two years earlier, as the Commission had proposed. MEPs argued that the time needed for industry and infrastructure to define and deploy standards-compliant interoperable equipment should be taken into account; - the necessary onboard equipment should be made available in sufficient quantities to meet demand; - the provisions in the proposal stipulating that satellite positioning technology should be imposed as the only system from 2008 for newly introduced systems and from 2012 for all systems should be deleted on the grounds that this decision should be left to the industry, the Member States and other parties concerned. Moreover, rather than prescribing a mandatory switch to satellite and mobile communication technologies, the directive should focus on the goal of achieving interoperability across the board between the different electronic toll systems already in place; - with a view to possible migration to systems based on satellite and mobile communication technologies, the Commission should be required to submit a report by 31 December 2009 containing both a study of the dissemination and interoperability of the various technologies and a cost-benefit analysis; - Member States should ensure that at least 50% of traffic flow - rather than 50% of toll lanes as specified in the proposal - in each toll station can use electronic toll systems. The committee argued that the reference point for electronic tolls should be the actual volume of traffic and not the abstract number of toll lanes. It added that lanes used for electronic toll collection might also be used for toll collection by other means, with due regard to safety; - rather than establishing a single toll contract for all 25 Member States, which would present legal, fiscal and financial problems, the committee called for a common European set of rules respected by all contract issuers; - the possibility of harmonising the rules of enforcement relating to electronic road tolls should be examined, given that, in the field of contractual interoperabiity, toll operators must be able to actually enforce the payment of fees if an electronic toll system is to work; - decisions by the Toll Committee on the definition of the European electronic toll service must be taken at least 12 months before the entry into force of this service, to allow operators time to make the necessary preparations.