Road transport: charging of heavy goods vehicles and infrastructures fees

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The committee adopted the report by Luigi COCILOVO (EPP-ED, I) tabling a large number of amendments to the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure: - Member States would be able to extend the imposition of tolls and user charges to roads other than the trans-European road network only after informing the Commission, consulting the local and/or regional authorities responsible and ensuring that the proposed tolls or user charges are compatible with any other charging system applied at local or regional level; - the committee proposed a more precise definition of "weighted average toll", specifiying that it should be calculated by reference to the specific road infrastructure concerned, on the basis of the cost per kilometre, and should be determined by the competent authority in each Member State; - the committee introduced a definition of "external costs" caused by the road freight system, including "congestion costs, environmental costs, such as local and global air pollution, noise, landscape damages and social costs, such as health and indirect accidents costs, not covered by insurances"; - whereas the proposal provided for weighted average tolls to include costs for "objective environmental elements", the committee added that this could include congestion costs "where these can be objectively quantified by a methodology duly adopted at European level for the purpose of such calculations". In another amendment, MEPs said that the Commission should draw up a uniform method of calculating external costs which may serve as a basis for Member States to internalise external costs; - as far as internal costs are concerned, when determining the levels of weighted average tolls it is also necessary to take account of payment of interest on capital invested and return on capital invested; - the committee added a new clause aimed at introducing a distinction between tolls levied by concessionaires (i.e. user charges paid to a company holding a concession under a contract drawn up with the state) and fee-based tolls (a form of taxation levied by a state or a public body); - compensation for road charges should be provided without discrimination to all hauliers from EU Member States, irrespective of the driver's country of origin - in other words, not just to drivers originating in the Member State where the road tolls are levied. Such compensation could take the form of a reduction in the rates of fuel taxes as well as a reduction in the rates of vehicle taxes as proposed. The compensation schemes should also take local and regional charging schemes into account; - when reporting to Parliament and Council on the implementation and effects of the directive, the Commission should take account not only of developments in technology and the trend in traffic density but also of the trend in road accidents and the impact of transport on the environment; - MEPs amended the Commission's proposed table of charges in order to differentiate clearly between more polluting vehicles (in the EURO 0 and EURO I categories) and the EURO II and less polluting vehicles which are already on the market and in use (EURO III and EURO IV and others).