

Road transport: recording equipment, tachograph

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The Committee has adopted the report of Mr. Florus WIJSENBEEK (NL, ELDR/VVD) on the Commission proposal for a Council regulation on amending Council regulation (EEC) 3821/85 and Council Directive 88/599/EEC on recording equipment in road transport or : to add an electronic component (personalised "smart card" for lorry drivers) to the existing mechanical tachograph. But a Commission representative told the Committee that this "smart card" will not be introduced soon. On the contrary, during the French Presidency, Council has not taken any decision and the Spanish Presidency is not considering this issue as a high priority. Transport Commissioner Neil KINNOCK told the Committee that the French presidency did not support the approach of the Commission, but proposed an alternative - and consequently French - solution to totally replace the current system with a digital system. The Commissioner said that such a system does not yet exist of course - it is still in a development stage. The Council therefore concluded that this issue needs a further technical examination before deciding between the different opinions. But the EP decision to adopt the WIJSENBEEK report could help Council to make up its mind, the Commission representative said. A new digital system could only be introduced by 2005. And that would mean that the present situation of fraud and differences between inspections both in undertakings and on the road in the Member States would remain unchanged. The Commission representative hoped that Parliament would give a clear signal to Council, but also to industry in order to start developing alternative systems. With the backing of all those concerned on the practical side of road transport, rapporteur WIJSENBEEK pointed out that the regulation of driving and rest periods is so rigid and allows scope for so little of the evidently necessary flexibility in this sector that infringements are not only the order of the day but also in a sense unavoidable. The rapporteur is an advocate of any improvement of monitoring instruments to support legislation, preferably adjusted to the situation, and the most appropriate instrument for this is indisputably the on-board computer since this offers greater possibilities than the tachograph with additional equipment such as proposed by the Commission in the present document. Mr. WIJSENBEEK also said out that the on-board computer offers the advantage that it can also process working hours, fuel consumption and journey planning. Although it is not impossible to manipulate an on-board computer, the opportunities are at all events less significant than these offered by the present equipment. The rapporteur felt, however, that EP should not reject out of hand the proposal for a driver card since this also has considerable advantages.