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

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By adopting the Council's common position on the charging of heavy good vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures, the Committee has given the green light for a further development of the internal market in road transport, thus ensuring that the costs associated with use of road infrastructure will be better covered. The proposal will also enable charges to be more closely adjusted to costs. The principle of territoriality will play a larger role in the recovery of the costs arising from use of the road infrastructure. A majority in the Committee decided not to follow its rapporteur Georg JARZEMBOWSKI (EPP, D), who had proposed far-going modifications. Consequently, the common position was adopted as it stood. The proposal applies to annual vehicle taxes, user charges and tolls for haulage vehicles with a maximum permissible gross laden weight of not less than 12 tonnes. The common position differs to a large extent from the original proposal of the Commission as well as from the amended proposal following the European Parliament's first reading. The Council incorporated some key amendments by the EP. Now, there will be no upper limit for vehicle taxes and on the basis of a specific provision, Greece will be granted a 50% temporary reduction on user charges, thus taking into consideration its geographical position. With respect to user charges, a special provision has been introduced in the common position allowing Austria to apply a toll on the motorway between Kufstein and Brenner. It was felt that the problem of the Brenner route and in particular its heavy traffic and strategic position should be taken into account, as recommended in the EP's opinion. The proposal will not affect vehicles in the overseas territories of member states or registered in the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla, the Azores or Madeira. Although the report is scheduled for the May plenary session in Strasbourg, the further procedure remained unclear. Under the Maastricht Treaty, which expires on 30 April 1999, the proposal was under the cooperation procedure. Under the Treaty of Amsterdam, which comes into force on 1 May 1999, it is subject to the codecision procedure.