Technical roadside inspection of the roadworthiness of commercial vehicles circulating in the Community

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From 1 January 2000, lorry drivers throughout the EU may face ad hoc roadworthiness checks in addition to the annual inspection commercial vehicles must undergo at a testing centre. The Committee accepted the Commission's proposal for a directive on roadside inspection. Rapporteur Frits CASTRICUM (PES, NL) said that a number of defects could be detected in this way which could sometimes be deliberately concealed at the annual inspections. The Commission proposal aims at better compliance with safety rules thanks to the deterrent effect of the roadworthiness provisions, and an improved compliance with environmental standards. The costs incurred by these roadside checks are estimated at ECU 40m to 60m per year for the control bodies and ECU 80m to 120m per year for businesses, making a total of between ECU 120m and 180m. Rapporteur CASTRICUM noted that benefits would arise from the improved standard of maintenance of heavy goods vehicles. On the basis of the number of lorries involved in fatal accidents and the average costs involved, the Commission calculated the beneficial cost differential would be approximately ECU 153m. Other environmental benefits would also accrue. By keeping all vehicles in a perfect state of repair, 2% of fuel would be saved. On the spot technical checks over and above the prescribed annual tests already exist in some member states, such as the UK. Other member states will have to create the necessary services to implement these controls. The application of the directive might remain a dead letter if the necessary infrastructure, in terms of both staff and equipment, was not rapidly set up. If not, a new and unnecessary distortion between the member states would be created. The rapporteur consequently stressed the importance of coordination in the implementation of this directive. The penalities for contravention must also be harmonised as far as possible.