Transport infrastructure: common charging framework, fair payment for use. White paper

1998/2170(COS) - 16/03/1999

The Committee has adopted the report by Barbara SCHMIDBAUER (PES, D) on the Commission proposals for a phased approach towards a common transport infrastructure charging framework in the EU. Fair payment for infrastructure use was the key element in this report. The Committee could basically agree with the Commission's goal of removing competitive distortions between the member states by progressively harmonising the principles for charging for the use of infrastructure. At present, transport charge systems vary widely in the member states. They need to be brought into line. In road transport, annual vehicle taxes vary by up to ECU 3000 a year. In rail transport, there are nine different charging systems and sea and air transport charging systems are equally variable. Welcoming the Commission's proposals, the rapporteur felt that they offer a chance to put the various charging systems in the EU (motorway tolls, vignettes) on a fairer basis. Mrs SCMIDBAUER emphasized that the measures should not increase the costs of transport but should enable more efficient and environmentally friendly use to be made of existing modes of transport. The Commission's cost charging plan is to be implemented in three stages. In 1999-2000 a Committee of Government Experts will be set up. In the second phase (2001-2004) charging systems especially for road and rail traffic will be harmonised, with charges being based on distance. In phase three, harmonised charging principles should be implemented. Amendments were adopted for a taxation of kerosene and - in sea transport - the gradual taxation of diesel oil and fuel, use of biofuels and biogreases for pleasure boats.