

Transport of dangerous goods by road: uniform procedures for checks

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In January 1997, the EU Council Directive on uniform checking procedures for those transporting dangerous goods came into force. Provisions in the Directive stipulate that Member States are to send an annual report to the Commission on the application of the Directive. It also stipulates that the Commission is obliged to forward a report on the application of the Directive to the European Parliament and Council every three years. This is the second report to be forwarded by the Commission, the content of which is based on the annual reports forwarded by the Member States. It covers the years 1999-2002. In view of the fact that this report covers two two-year periods, the Commission is of the opinion that the analysis is both meaningful and relevant.

The conclusions of the report are as follows:

Although most of the Member States performed roadside checks on the transport of dangerous goods between 1999 and 2002, the frequency of checks varied considerably from Member State to Member State, with some Member States conducting no checks at all. The frequency of checks across the EU as a whole has decreased. This is a worrying trend given that the proportion of vehicles found during checks to be infringing the Directive's provisions is substantial. The ratio of the number of infringements to the number of checks in the EU as a whole has increased from 0.22 (1997-1998) to 0.26 (1999-2002). The Commission suggests that the frequency of checks ought to be higher in some countries, even if no direct correlation between the frequency of checks and number of infringements has been found.

The most common infringements are a lack of transport documents concerning the load of dangerous goods and the lack of orange panels showing that the vehicle is transporting dangerous goods. The report also indicates that the majority of infringements were classified under "Others" owing to the incompatibility between the checklist used by the enforcement authorities and the harmonised codes.

The most common penalty was a fine followed by a warning, which may have been supplemented by a ban on continuing the journey.

To conclude, the Commission suggests that information gleaned from analysing the report indicates that road checks are an effective tool in revealing the problems connected with the safety of the transport of dangerous goods. Finally, the Commission would like to point out to the Member States that the harmonised infringement codes should be used in their annual reports and that all of the Member States are obliged to send annual reports to the Commission.