Road transport: charging of heavy goods vehicles and infrastructures fees

2003/0175(COD) - 15/12/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Corien **WORTMANN-KOOL** (EPP-ED, NL) amending the Council's common position. The amendments were negotiated in advance with the Council and the European Commission and supported by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, GUE/NGL and UEN groups. They address the most controversial issues of this directive, such as a clear strategy for internalising external costs, the geographical scope of the directive, the types of lorries concerned, and obligatory toll variations.

Lorries to be covered by the directive: barring exemptions, the legislation will apply to all commercial vehicles over 3.5 tonnes from 2012. This falls short of Parliament’s position in first reading (vehicles over 3.5 tonnes immediately) and the report initially presented by the Transport Committee, which voted for vehicles over 3.5 tonnes from 2010. (Please see the summary of 14/11/2005.)

External costs: again, theamendments finally adopted by Parliament fall short of the draft report adopted by the Transport Committee in November. Within two years of the entry into force of the Directive, the Commission shall present, after examining all options including environment, noise, congestion and health related costs, a generally applicable, transparent, and comprehensible model for the assessment of all external costs to serve as the basis for future calculations of infrastructure charges, and this model will be accompanied by an impact analysis on the internalisation of external costs for all modes of transport and a strategy for a stepwise implementation of this model for all modes of transport. There is no definition of external costs in the legislation.

Geographical scope: Member States mayapply tolls and/or user charges on roads not included in the trans-European road network, inter alia, on parallel roads to which traffic may be diverted from the trans-European road network and/or which are in direct competition with certain parts of that network,provided that the imposition of tolls on such roads does not discriminate against international traffic and does not result in distortions of competition between operators. Where a Member State decides to maintain or introduce tolls and/or user charges on only parts of the trans-European road network, the resulting exemptions for the other parts (for reasons such as their isolation or low levels of congestion or pollution or where essential for the introduction of a new tolling arrangement) shall not result in any discrimination against international traffic. Member States shall also inform the Commission at least four months before their implementation about new tolling arrangements applicable to parallel roads to which traffic may be diverted from the trans-European road network and/or which are in direct competition with certain parts of that network on which tolls are levied. This information shall include at least an explanation of the geographic extent of the toll, the vehicles covered and the levels of toll envisaged, together with an explanation of how the level of toll was determined.

Variation of toll: The new Directive will also permit greater variation of motorway tolls compared with current rules. Whereas repayment of infrastructure costs is currently the only element that can be considered in setting tolls, Member States will in future be able to vary tolls according to the pollution discharged by vehicles (Euro category, PM10 particulate and nitrogen oxide levels), and according to the time and type of day - holiday or normal working day - and season (thereby taking account of traffic congestion). Consideration of these elements will be compulsory for all new toll schemes introduced after 2010. Specified derogations are permitted but should be notified to the Commission. Member States may apply specific taxes or charges on vehicles or loads of abnormal weights or dimensions, as well as parking fees and specific urban traffic charges. Member States may also apply regulatory charges specifically

designed to combat time and place-related traffic congestion; and regulatory charges designed to combat environmental impacts, including poor air quality, on any road notably in urban areas, including trans-European network roads crossing an urban area.

Charges: Parliament amended the Commission's proposed table of charges in order to differentiate clearly between more polluting vehicles (in the EURO 0 and EURO I categories) and the EURO II and less polluting vehicles which are already on the market and in use (EURO III and EURO IV and others).

Revenue: Parliament added a recital stating that revenue from tolls or user charges should be used for the maintenance of the infrastructure concerned and the transport sector as a whole, in the interest of a balanced and sustainable development of transport networks.