Tax and duty-free allowances: exemption from valued added tax VAT and excise duty of goods imported by travellers from third countries (repeal. Directive 69/169/EEC)

2006/0021(CNS) - 10/10/2006

The committee adopted the report by Charles TANNOCK (EPP-ED, UK) broadly approving the proposed directive on the exemption from VAT and excise duty of goods imported by persons travelling from third countries. It nevertheless tabled a number of amendments under the consultation procedure:

- a new definition was introduced into the directive: "sea ferry or cruise travellers", meaning any passenger travelling by means of a scheduled maritime ferry, liner or cruise ship for at least 50 km. The thresholds and quantitative limits allowed for air travel should be extended to such passengers, and the monetary thresholds should be increased from EUR 500, as proposed by the Commission, to EUR 1000;

- following on from the proposed increase for air and sea travel, the monetary thresholds for land crossing proposed by the Commission (EUR 220 per person) should be increased to EUR 330;

- the quantities of still wine and beer exempt from VAT and excise duty should be equivalent in terms of alcoholic content;

- exemptions for imports of tobacco and alcohol should not apply to travellers under the age of 18 (which is the legal drinking age in most EU Member States);

- Member States should "have the right to monitor the rate of and take measures necessary to counteract petrol tourism for the purposes of tax avoidance in their border regions";

- the provision allowing Member States to apply lower monetary and quantitative thresholds to "persons resident in the frontier zone" should be deleted on the grounds that it is discriminatory, hard to police and arbitrary;

- an automatic review mechanism (every 5 years) for the monetary thresholds should be introduced into the directive.