



Electronic Toll Service and road charging

The maintenance and development of road infrastructure, allowing for smooth mobility of persons and goods, is essential for the internal market. Tolls are increasingly used but existing toll systems are often mutually incompatible, leading to delays. Moreover, public investment in inland transport has been decreasing for years. The EU has launched several initiatives, including the European Electronic Toll service, in the area of road charging.

Background

There are approximately 72 000 kilometres of charged roads in the EU, of which 60% is equipped with electronic toll systems and 40% is covered by vignette systems (time-based form of charges). Many of the electronic toll systems are mutually incompatible. This results in delays and inconvenience for international road transport.

To facilitate road transport flows, the EU [launched](#) the European Electronic Toll Service (EETS) in 2004. Its purpose is to enable road users to pay tolls throughout the European Union (EU) with one subscription contract, one service provider and one on-board unit. The EETS should be usable on all road infrastructure with electronic tolls, ensuring the interoperability of electronic toll systems on the entire EU road network. The legislation provides for the rights and obligations of toll chargers, service providers and users, and specifies that [EETS users](#) must not pay a higher toll than the corresponding national/local toll. The EETS was to have been available within three years for heavy goods vehicles (i.e. by October 2012) and five years for other types of vehicle (i.e. by October 2014).

On road infrastructure charging, the EU's approach, outlined in the [2011 Transport White Paper](#), is that transport charges and taxes must be restructured towards wider application of the 'polluter pays' and the 'user pays' principles. Public investment in transport infrastructure has been decreasing and cleaner vehicles are likely to reduce public revenues from fuel excise duties. The Commission

[pointed out](#) that making users, rather than taxpayers pay for maintaining infrastructure is a means of bridging this financing gap.

Heavy goods vehicles are covered by a 1999 [Directive](#) (known as the "Eurovignette" Directive). While the use of tolls and vignettes are not mandatory for Member States, the Directive provides [framework conditions](#) for levying "user charges" on lorries above 3.5 tonnes. This Directive was [revised](#) in 2011, notably to allow for the inclusion of air and noise pollution costs in the calculation of tolls.

Regarding light private vehicles, the Commission adopted a [Communication](#) in 2012 outlining the general principles to be applied by Member States intending to introduce or further develop a vignette system. Such systems must comply with the Treaty provisions on non-discrimination ([Article 18 TFEU](#)). In particular, the price of long-term vignettes must be proportionate to short-term ones in order not to discriminate against occasional users.

Implementation of EETS

The Commission adopted a [report](#) on the implementation of the EETS in August 2012. It points out the serious delays in setting it up and proposes a list of actions to speed up implementation. The Commission in particular is pushing Member States to deploy EETS at regional level as a first step, and highlights the possibility of technical assistance for such regional initiatives.

EP views and next steps

The European Parliament is due to vote on a [report](#) from the Committee on Transport and Tourism (rapporteur: Jim Higgins, EPP, Ireland) on a strategy for an electronic toll service and a vignette system for light private vehicles in Europe. At a December 2012 [conference](#) at which the results of a public consultation on road charging were presented, the Commission mentioned [it is considering](#) an initiative on road charging as part of a package on the EU road market, expected [later in 2013](#).