



Eurovignette: a hard-fought compromise on a "fair price" for road transport

Committees: Committee on Transport and Tourism

Road toll prices for the haulage industry as capped under the Eurovignette directive were originally intended to cover only infrastructure costs. In future they will reflect the cost of noise and air pollution as well. The EP Transport and Tourism Committee today approved new rules designed to strike a balance between the economic interests of the countries on the EU's periphery and environmental needs.

All the political group leaders in the Transport Committee gave their backing to a compromise drafted by Said El Khadraoui (S&D, BE). However, differences between Member States on the periphery and those at the centre of Europe weighed heavily in the debate before the vote on Tuesday 12 April. "This is the very least we need to ensure the 'polluter pays' principle is introduced into the haulage industry", argued Mr El Khadraoui.

Greater flexibility

The draft text approved by the Transport Committee at second reading today takes account to a large degree of the Member States' wishes. It allows exemptions for lorries between 3.5 and 12 tonnes provided the Member State can give a justification. To encourage fleet renewal, it provides for staggered exemptions that are limited in time for heavy vehicles with the cleanest engines (EURO 5, 6), including in sensitive areas such as mountain regions.

Toll prices will also be able to vary according to the time of day but must remain revenue-neutral. The aim is to encourage lorries to avoid certain road stretches during peak hours (to be limited to a maximum of 8 hours a day), without generating additional revenue for toll administrators.

Using toll revenue to optimise transport

In exchange, the Transport Committee wants national finance ministers to declare toll revenues as well as the use made of this money, to be reinvested in transport infrastructure, without distinction between different modes of transport, say MEPs. And 15% should be earmarked at the outset for transeuropean TEN-T projects.

As in the past, the introduction of distance-based tolls for lorries will remain optional. However, in four years' time the Commission must examine the effectiveness of this measure and the possibility of adapting it for other forms of pollution and vehicle categories.

Armed with the result of the Transport Committee's vote (26 in favour, 1 against and 11 abstentions), Mr El Khadraoui will now ask the Council to support his text before it is submitted to the full Parliament and put to the vote at the June plenary session.

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