



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESSE 300

## **"Eurovignette" directive adopted**

The Council today<sup>1</sup> approved the European Parliament's amendments to a draft directive on road use charges for heavy goods vehicles ("Eurovignette"). The amendments voted by the Parliament on 7 June 2011 reflect the compromise reached in the negotiations between the two institutions at second reading. The Council's approval means that the "Eurovignette" directive has now been adopted ([PE-CONS 24/11](#) + statements in [13134/11 ADD 1](#)). Member states will have two years following the publication of the directive in the EU's Official Journal to transpose it into their national legislation.

The new European framework law, which is a revision of the "Eurovignette" directive of 1999, aims at reducing pollution from road freight transport and making traffic flow smoother by levying tolls that factor in the cost of air and noise pollution due to traffic (so-called external costs) and help avoid road congestion. To this end, member states may apply an "external cost charge" on lorries, complementing the already existing infrastructure charge designed to recover the costs of construction, operation, maintenance and development of road infrastructure. They may also modulate the infrastructure charge to take account of road congestion, with a maximum variation rate of 175 % during peak periods limited to five hours per day.

The level of tolls will vary depending on the emissions of the vehicle, the distance travelled, and the location and the time of road use. Such differentiated charging is intended to encourage the move to transport patterns which are more respectful of the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> The decision was taken without discussion at a meeting of the General Affairs Council. Italy and Spain voted against, and Ireland, the Netherlands and Portugal abstained.

# **P R E S S**

Whereas under the current directive application of tolls has basically been limited to the trans-European road network, it may now be extended to cover all motorways.

Vehicles complying with the most stringent emission standards will be exempted from the air pollution charge for four years after those standards have become applicable; that means that vehicles of the EURO VI emission class will be exempted until 31 December 2017. In addition, EURO V vehicles will be exempted until the date of application of the EURO VI standards, that is, until 31 December 2013. Less polluting vehicles than EURO VI, namely hybrid and electrical heavy goods vehicles, are exempted.

Moreover, member states may exempt vehicles under 12 tonnes from the tolls if they consider this necessary, for example if application of tolls would create significant adverse effects or excessive administrative costs. However, they must inform the Commission about the reasons for such a decision.

While a mark-up may be added to the infrastructure charge in mountainous regions under certain conditions, the amount of this mark-up will be deducted from the external cost charge. This deduction, though, will not apply to the most polluting vehicles, that is, the EURO emission classes 0, I, II and from 2015 onwards also III.

Member states should, but are not obliged to, earmark revenue generated by the infrastructure and external cost charges for projects in the transport sector, in particular in support of the trans-European transport network. There is, however, an earmarking obligation for revenue stemming from infrastructure charge mark-ups in mountainous regions or from the simultaneous application of such a mark-up and an external cost charge to the most polluting vehicles.

