

TITLE OF THE EVENT:	Meeting of TRAN Committee
TOPIC:	Eurovignette III
DATE:	24 May 2011
PLACE:	European Parliament

1. Background

Since the end of February 2011, informal negotiations took place between the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission in order to try to reach an agreement on the revision of Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures (the so-called Eurovignette Directive). Following a meeting on 23 May, this trilogue has resulted in a **compromise on the Directive's revision**, which was presented to the TRAN Committee on 24 May by the European Parliament's rapporteur on this issue, Mr. Saïd EL KHADRAOUI (PSE).

2. Summary of discussions

Mr. EL KHADRAOUI highlighted the following elements as the main building blocks of the informal compromise:

- Internalization of external costs: The external costs that may be internalized are limited to noise and air pollution (as in the Council's first reading common position).
- Congestion: Congestion cannot be internalized as an external cost, but can be taken into account by modulating the infrastructure charge in a revenue-neutral way and within strictly defined limits (i.e. maximum variation rate of 175% during maximum 5 hours per day – as in the Council's first reading common position, even though the European Parliament suggests relaxing these conditions further to a maximum variation rate of 200% and a period of up to 8 hours per day).
- Earmarking: Despite efforts by the European Parliament, there is **no overall legal obligation** for Member States to earmark the additional revenue generated by the external cost charge. However, Member States made a "strong commitment" to re-invest these revenues in sustainable transport (and *mainly* in the *road* transport system). Member States should also use at least 15% of the revenue of *both* the external cost charge *and* the infrastructure charge to provide financial support to TEN-T projects. Moreover, in mountainous areas where extra mark-ups can be added, Member States are actually required to earmark *all* external cost charge and mark-up revenues collected from the most polluting vehicles (EURO emission class 0 to III, but the latter only from 2015) for the financing of TEN-T priority projects situated on the same corridor. In addition, each Member State will have to **report regularly** to the Commission about the types and height of the charges applied, the related variations and the use of the revenue, indicating in detail how that Member State acted upon its earmarking "commitment".
- Information for users: The European Commission will produce a comprehensive user guide, to be updated regularly, providing information on the tariffs applicable in the various Member States.
- Interoperability: Stronger emphasis is put on the need for proper implementation of the electronic interoperability of toll systems throughout the EU.

- Vehicle scope: The Directive should apply to vehicles having a maximum permissible laden weight of not less than 3.5 tonnes, but Member States may provisionally limit the scope to vehicles having a maximum permissible laden weight of not less than 12 tonnes, provided they notify the European Commission of their decision and of the reasons thereof.
- Possible extension: The European Commission should explore **whether and how the internalization of external costs could be strengthened in the coming years**, e.g. by introducing a more stringent regime, bringing in more externalities and/or extending the system to other roads and other modes of transport. For this purpose, the Commission is to present, after the entry into force of the revised Directive, a first report within 12 months, including a roadmap, as well as a possible legislative proposal within 4 years.

During the TRAN Committee's meeting of 24 May, most fractions (apart from the Greens) appeared ready to support the compromise reached during the informal negotiations, even though nearly all of them expressed disappointment on the final result. Bearing in mind the very narrow majorities in the Council, there was a wide consensus in the TRAN Committee on the need to secure a first opening towards the polluter-payer principle in the field of road transport, especially because the dossier had been blocked for two years due to the reticence of various Member States.

3. Next steps

The informal compromise still has to be endorsed by the European Parliament (during the plenary on 7 June 2011) as well as by the Council. However, bearing in mind the very narrow majorities on this controversial dossier, the final endorsement by the European Parliament and the Council should not be taken for granted.
