

Road charging: Heavy lorries to pay for costs of air and noise pollution

EU Ministers have today voted in favour of new EU rules to allow Member States to charge heavy lorries, not only for the costs of the infrastructure which is currently the case, but also to levy an additional charge to cover the cost of air and noise pollution. The proposal to revise the current "Eurovignette Directive" will enable Member States to better manage problems of congestion, with a new flexibility to differentiate the charges applied to heavy lorries at different periods of the day.

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Transport, said "This is an important step in the right direction. It is part of a much broader drive to create a "fair financial" framework for transport where prices for the different transport modes reflect the real costs to society and the taxpayer. These new rules send the right signals to operators. The aim is to incentivise a shift in behaviour so companies invest in more efficient logistics, less polluting vehicles and more sustainable transport at large."

The current rules

The 1999 "Eurovignette" Directive on charging heavy goods vehicles for the use of infrastructure sets an EU framework for the levying of road charges on heavy goods. The Directive authorises, but does not oblige, Member States to levy 'user charges' (time-based charges, eg per day, per week, per year) or tolls (distance-based charges e.g. per kilometre) on lorries above 3.5 tonnes - small lorries - provided that it does not result in any discrimination and that the charges are set at a level which does not exceed the recovery of costs of which are strictly necessary to maintain and replace the road infrastructure.

The current "Eurovignette Directive" prohibits the recovery of other costs, e.g. the so-called external costs such as air pollution and noise costs currently borne by society at large and tax payers.

The proposals

The proposal discussed by Transport Ministers to revise the "Eurovignette" Directive would :¹

¹ Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures

- Give Member States the option to charge heavy lorries to cover the **costs of air and noise pollution** from traffic emissions on road tolls paid by lorries, and not only the cost of infrastructure. This air and noise pollution charge will have to be calculated according to a common method and respect caps defined in the Directive to avoid abusive practices.
- Allow a wider differentiation of toll rates at constant revenue so Member States can better manage traffic and reduce **congestion**. In practice, Member States will be able to choose to vary the tolls according to congestion levels and charge more at peak periods provided that lower tariffs are applied during off-peak periods.
- Encourage the revenue from the additional charges to be used to finance investments into making transport more sustainable such as research and development into clean vehicle technologies, construction of alternative transport infrastructure, reduction of pollution at source.
- Extend the scope of the EU "Eurovignette Directive" so that not only the TEN-T network (as is currently the case) but also **all motorways** across Europe are included and thus bound to respect the rules of the Directive to calculate toll rates and avoid discrimination.

What happens next?

The text agreed by Transport Ministers will be submitted to the European Parliament and must be voted on by MEPs before becoming law.

Background

About 30,000 km of motorways are currently tolled in Europe. About half of these are in the TEN-T network and therefore fall in the scope of the "Eurovignette" Directive. Under the revised Directive all motorways should be covered. This is a substantial increase with all of Europe's 30,000 km of tolled motorway covered.

Currently, existing toll rates vary typically between 15 and 25 cent per kilometre depending on the type of lorry and the network. The new Directive would de facto authorise an increase of toll rates, if Member States decide to do so, of around 20-30% i.e. on average 3-4 cents per kilometre.

NB For roads outside the scope of the EU "Eurovignette" Directive the principle of subsidiarity applies. It is for individual Member States to decide if and what level of charges they introduce. In particular, urban congestion charging schemes such as those implemented in London and Stockholm are not covered by the Directive.

For a map showing which countries charge tolls and user charges and more detailed background on the Eurovignette Directive and proposals see also [MEMO/10/489](#)

The full package is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/greening/index_en.htm