



Revision of the eurovignette directive COM(2003)448

As the representative organisation of local and regional government across Europe - representing some 100.000 local and regional authorities through their national associations - CEMR welcomes the Commission's proposal to revise the 1999 eurovignette directive, which aims to align national systems of tolls and road use charges on common principles so as to internalise certain transport-related costs and help establish fair conditions of competition between operators in the EU.

The draft proposal introduces a number of positive provisions, which will encourage the use of cleaner, safer modes of transport, and could contribute to reducing congestion on Europe's road network.

1. Earmarking revenues for sustainable transport modes

CEMR also welcomes the proposed provision to ensure that the revenue from tolls and user charges are earmarked not only for the maintenance of the road infrastructure on which the tolls are levied but also for the transport sector as a whole. We however believe that it should be made clear that this provision allows Member States to use the revenue for the development of more sustainable forms of transport, in line with the White Paper on European Transport policy (COM(2001)370) and the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy.

We therefore urge MEPs to:

- Support amendments 162, 166 and ENVI Committee amendments 10, 27 and 28
- Reject amendments 58, 164, 205, 207, 215

2. Including the marginal social costs of transport

Furthermore, we regret that the proposal does not include, in addition to infrastructure use costs, the external costs of congestion and environmental impacts as a basis for setting tolls. An approach which includes the full 'marginal social costs' of transport (including environmental and congestion costs) would significantly enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the transport system, as suggested by the Commission's 1998 White Paper on infrastructure charging (COM(1998)466) and the 2001 White Paper on European Transport Policy. In addition the reports of the Commission's High Level Group on Infrastructure Charging (1999) show that it is not only desirable but also feasible to recover such costs.

We would therefore urge MEPs to:

- Support amendments 30, 73, 74, 85, 111, 129, 175 and ENVI Committee amendments 6, 18, 24
- Reject amendments 96, 108, 112, 113, 114, 143, 144

While we welcome the Commission's proposal to allow Member States to vary tolls according to the time of day and level of congestion, we believe that the 100% threshold - in relation to the cheapest time of day - is far too narrow to enable the mark-up to act as a disincentive and would thus not be consistent with both national and European policies aimed at promoting a modal shift.

We would therefore urge MEPs to:

- Support amendments 16, 118
- Reject amendments 15, 48, 49, 50, 117, 119 (1st paragraph), 126, 198

3. The question of sensitive areas

CEMR agrees with the Commission that particular attention needs to be devoted to sensitive areas. We however contend that Member States should have the possibility to add a mark-up to the toll above the 25% threshold proposed by the Commission, so as to enable the toll to reflect the specific conditions in that area. We also believe that particular account should be taken of urban areas in the legislation. We would stress that, while there is no explicit definition of 'particularly sensitive regions' in the proposal, this category should include urban areas due to the considerable congestion, pollution and health problems to which they are subject. We believe that this would create greater synergy between this proposal and the thematic strategy on the urban environment, which is currently under preparation.

We would therefore urge MEPs to:

- Support amendments 64, 68, 131, 132, 139, 200 and ENVI Committee amendments 11 and 25
- Reject amendments 61, 62, 130, 134, 140, 216

4. The role of local and regional government

CEMR contends that local and regional authorities must remain free to apply tolls and/or user charges on roads for which they have responsibility, as necessary in particular to tackle congestion and environmental problems.

Furthermore, we believe that local and regional authorities should be consulted and involved in the decision-making process wherever relevant, in particular as regards tolls that would lead to increased congestion or pollution within their area. Member States should take into account the respective responsibilities of each level of government when using the revenue from tolls.

We would therefore urge MEPs to:

- Support amendments 43, 46, 102, 106, 183
- Reject amendments 47, 104, 191, 192

5. The scope of the Directive

CEMR agrees with the Commission that the scope of the Directive should also cover other major roads and parallel roads to the trans-European road Network, so as to avoid the negative consequences in terms of congestion and environmental problems that traffic diversion from the TENs would cause.

We would therefore urge MEPs to reject amendments 45, 80, 81, 103, 214, 218, 220