



European Rail
Infrastructure Managers



The Voice
of European
Railways

Press Release, 11 March 2009

European Parliament sends clear message: Trucks should pay for pollution and congestion they cause

The European rail sector welcomes the result of today's vote in the European Parliament on the revision of the Eurovignette Directive, with a majority of MEPs voting for the internalisation of external costs of heavy goods vehicles. The outcome of the vote is a first - but important - step towards lifting the current ban on applying environmental charges to trucks. European governments should now follow the positive example set by the parliament.

The encouraging result of the vote is the outcome of the impressive work of Socialist rapporteur Saïd El Khadraoui, who drafted well-thought-out compromise amendments on crucial issues, enabling a majority of MEPs to vote in favour of the text. The proposal will ensure that member states are permitted to charge trucks for their external costs - or in other words, to implement the "polluter pays principle", which national governments can already apply to private cars and to rail. The proposed rules are flexible at the same time, as it is up to the member state to decide whether to impose charges.

While the proposals are a good step forwards, the rail sector regrets the fact that the costs of CO₂ emissions are not taken into account, especially as tackling climate change is high on the EU's agenda. However, the fact that MEPs voted to keep in congestion costs, and to allow member states flexibility in implementing such congestion charges is welcomed.

The result of the vote, with 359 MEPs in favour and 256 against the proposal, sends a strong signal to European governments in favour of reducing the environmental impact of road transport. The European rail sector now looks to the Czech presidency of the EU to push for an agreement among European governments that would allow member states to implement the directive as soon as possible. The current financial crisis should not be used as an excuse to block this vital legislation: the new rules would only come into force in 2012, by which time the global economy should be back on its feet.

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BACKGROUND:

The revision of the Eurovignette Directive was proposed by the European Commission in July last year as part of its "Greening Transport" package. It is an important milestone in the drive to internalise the external costs of transport. This package finally opens up the possibility for Member States to put the "polluter pays" principle into practice in the freight transport sector and helps to create a more level playing field between transport modes. A broad coalition of representatives of the transport sector, including railways, intermodal transport, logistic and forwarders, have long argued that EU Member States should be able to apply internalisation for road freight transport – as they can already do for the other modes of transport and for private cars. This will finally put an end to the strange situation in which the most polluting transport mode – road – is the only one to benefit from a privileged legal situation: a ban on taking external costs into account when setting road charges for heavy goods vehicles. The rail sector's position paper on the revision of the Eurovignette Directive is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/Eurovignette>



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UNIFE represents the interests of the European Rail Industry towards the European institutions, international railway associations and other business relations. The European Rail Industry provides competitive railway systems for increased rail traffic and follows the objective of making rail transport the sustainable solution for the challenges of the 21st century mobility. The European Rail Industry consists of trend setting industries in the field of rolling stock, infrastructure, information technology and signalling, provision of part and services. For more information, see www.unife.org

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EIM, the association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers, was established to promote the interests and views of the independent infrastructure managers in Europe, following liberalisation of the railway market. It is a lobbying organisation which also provides technical expertise to the appropriate European bodies. To find out more about EIM, visit www.eimrail.org

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The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together more than 70 European railway undertakings and infrastructure companies. CER represents the interests of its members vis-à-vis the European institutions as well as other policy makers and transport actors. CER's main focus is promoting the strengthening of rail as essential to the creation of a sustainable transport system which is efficient, effective and environmentally sound. For more information, see www.cer.be