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Press Release

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Eurovignette revision will remove truckers' licence to pollute

The revision of the Eurovignette Directive will put an end to the privileged situation of road transport, politicians and experts agreed at a high level event hosted by the European rail sector in Strasbourg on 18 November. Currently Member States are legally prevented from charging trucks the true costs of their environmental impact. This distorts competition in the transport sector, as other modes, such as rail, can already be charged for their external costs, in addition to track access charges.

The dinner debate on the revision of the Eurovignette Directive was attended by several leading Members of European Parliament as well as national and European officials. Transport currently produces 27% of all CO₂ emissions within the EU-27, of which road transport is responsible for a massive 72% - a fact that makes firm actions on reducing CO₂ emissions from road vehicles extremely urgent.

Speaking at the event, Saïd El Khadraoui, the European Parliament's rapporteur on the revision of the Eurovignette Directive, welcomed the Commission's initiative, including the proposal to earmark revenues to develop more sustainable mobility. He said that this was a much needed first step to bring the road sector in line with other modes. As a rapporteur he will call for the Directive to encompass a broader range of external costs: "In addition to costs of congestion, local air pollution and noise as proposed by the Commission, the revised Eurovignette directive should also allow Member States to charge trucks for their CO₂ emissions," he said.

Marc Papinutti, Director of Transport and Infrastructure at the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Land Planning, reconfirmed that the current French EU Presidency is aiming to achieve substantial progress on the revision of the Directive in order to make an agreement possible before the end of the current legislative period in June 2009. An agreement in first reading is also strongly supported by the rail sector. Michael Clausecker, Director General of UNIFE said: "Although we would prefer a more ambitious directive, including CO₂ emissions and accident costs, given the urgency of the situation, we will support the European Commission, Council and Parliament to achieve an agreement at first reading."

Mathias Hellriegel, a leading legal expert in the use of regulation to tackle climate change, pointed out that the Commission's proposal does not oblige Member States to apply external cost charging: "The revised Eurovignette would simply enable national governments to put the correct price tag on road transport, bringing it into line with other modes, such as aviation and maritime which are being brought into the Emissions Trading Scheme," he said. "Laws should apply to all competitors in a market equally in order to allow prices to reflect true costs," he added. Johannes Ludewig, CER Executive Director, agreed: "The fact that road is protected, while rail as the greenest mode of transport already accounts for its external costs through specific legislation and indirect participation



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in the European Emissions Trading Scheme, slows down much needed modal shift from road to rail. If the EU's climate change goals are to be taken seriously, greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector must be reduced. Trucks must be charged for their impact on the environment," he said.

EIM Secretary General Michael Robson highlighted the potential benefits of the Eurovignette revision: "The Eurovignette will not lead to a significant increase in prices of goods. However, the directive will send a price signals to make polluters finally pay."

Background: The Eurovignette Directive sets out the common rules by which Member States can charge heavy goods vehicles for the use of the road network. The current framework prevents governments from charging trucks for their impact on the environment. The Commission proposed a revision on 8 July 2008 which will open up the possibility for Member States to put the "polluter pays" principle into practice and help to create a more level playing field between transport modes. The rail sector's position paper on the revision of the Directive is available [here](#) (Pdf, 295KB)

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The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together 71 railway undertakings and infrastructure companies from all over Europe. CER represents the interests of its members towards 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

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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, with a view to supporting the development of the rail industry. 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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