

Charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures

2017/0114(COD) - 25/10/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 398 votes to 179, with 32 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures.

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amended the Commission proposal as follows:

Tolls and user charges: the proposed Directive aims to help meet EU emission reduction targets for the transport sector and make road user charges fairer. Since distance-based pricing (tolls) rather than time-based pricing (vignettes) better reflects actual use, emission levels and pollution, the draft Directive would phase out time-based pricing systems after an appropriate transitional phase.

Parliament considered that road charging imposed by Member States would need to become distance-based from 2023 for heavy-duty vehicles and larger goods vans with a maximum permissible laden mass of between 2.4 and 3.5 tonnes and a height of more than 2 metres and from end of 2027 for light duty vehicles, meaning vans and minibuses.

As of 1 January 2020, tolls and user charges applied to heavy duty vehicles shall apply to all heavy duty vehicles and vans intended for the carriage of goods.

User rights (proportionality and equal treatment): the proportionality of user charges may take into consideration the specific characteristics of transport operations which start in a Member State on the periphery of the EU.

According to the amended text, road networks covered by an infrastructure charge shall offer a high level of road safety and be equipped with all the necessary infrastructure, such as safe parking areas in all weather conditions, to comply with the obligations laid down in the Regulation on rest periods and driving times.

External cost charging: from 1 January 2021, Member States that levy tolls shall apply an external-cost charge for traffic-based air or noise pollution to heavy duty vehicles and to vans intended for the carriage of goods on all parts of the network referred to in the Directive that are subject to an infrastructure charge.

From 1 January 2026 onwards, an external-cost charge imposed on any section of the road network shall apply in a non-discriminatory manner to all vehicle categories. Member States may apply derogations which allow external-cost charges to be adjusted for vehicles of historical interest.

Congestion charging: Members proposed that congestion charges may be introduced or maintained independently from infrastructure charges. Member States may, however, decide to exempt buses and coaches for the promotion of collective transport and socio-economic development and territorial cohesion.

Mark-up: the mark-up shall not exceed 15 % of the weighted average infrastructure charge, except in mountainous areas, where infrastructure costs as well as climate and environmental damage are higher, in which case the mark-up may not exceed 50 %.

Variation in charges: Parliament proposed that from the date of entry into force of this Directive, zero-emission vehicles shall benefit from infrastructure charges reduced by 50 % compared to the lowest rate. Zero-emission operation shall benefit from the same reduction, provided that such operation can be proved.

Member States may take into account the improvement of the environmental performance of the vehicle which is linked to that vehicle's conversion to alternative fuels. A standing subscription or any other mechanism approved by the toll systems operator should allow users to benefit from a variation in toll charges that rewards the improved environmental performance of the vehicle, after conversion.

Discounts: for heavy duty vehicles and vans intended for the carriage of goods, Member States may provide for discounts or reductions to the infrastructure charge on condition that such discounts or reductions do not exceed 20 % of the infrastructure charge paid by equivalent vehicles not eligible for the discount or reduction and those used for local or habitual transport, or both.

For light vehicles, in particular for frequent users on the areas of dispersed settlements and the outskirts of cities, Member States may provide for discounts or reductions to the infrastructure charge provided that such discounts contribute to social cohesion and ensure the mobility of peripheral regions or remote areas.

Member States or competent authorities may introduce a kilometre-based flat-rate exemption on a specific road section, taking into account the mobility patterns and economic interest of peripheral regions.

In mountain areas and peripheral regions, Member States or competent authorities may vary toll rates for heavy vehicles according to distance travelled by the tolled vehicles to minimise socio-economic impacts.

Use of revenues: revenues generated from infrastructure and external costs charges, or the equivalent in financial value of these revenues, shall be used to carry out road network maintenance and upkeep, and to optimise the entire transport system.

Revenues shall be used to: (i) reduce air and noise pollution from road transport; (ii) finance collective and sustainable modes of transport; (iii) develop alternative fuel infrastructures; (iv) support the trans-European transport network and eliminating bottlenecks.

Lastly, Members proposed to establish in each Member State an independent supervisory authority for infrastructure charging responsible for ensuring compliance with this Directive.

