

EU Member States should not fail to introduce tolling and external-cost charging on all major roads

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) notes with disappointment a preliminary decision taken by the Council last week on the Eurovignette Directive revision that would allow retaining the scheme of time-based charging. This would hinder Europe's efforts to clean up and decarbonise transport with a shift to low-carbon modes like rail. It would go against Member States' green-transport rhetoric and the user-pays principle, which requires charging at least marginal cost (as also stressed by Parliament), implying distance-based charging.

EU law requires railways to pay distance-based charges for infrastructure use everywhere in the EU, fully in line with the user-pays approach. Therefore, distance-based charging (tolling) on all major roads (and not just 25% as currently) should naturally be implemented to comply with the very same principle. The European Commission's May 2017 proposal for a revised Eurovignette Directive (1999/62/EC) on road charging recognised this, by proposing a phase-out of time-based road charging (vignettes) for heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs, i.e. trucks and coaches) by 2023, thus opening the door for distance-based road charging. The European Parliament, in its first-reading position of October 2018, proposed a vignette phase-out already by 2022. That would support fair competition between road and rail.

Fair competition and the interests of society more broadly would also be supported by external-cost charging for HDVs wherever they are tolled, as proposed by the European Parliament, and by also applying tolls to HDVs of less than 12 tonnes.

Regrettably, however, the Council's latest Eurovignette text, scheduled to be agreed by EU Member States as their General Approach on 2 December, aims:

- a) to entirely remove any deadlines for phasing out time-based road charging, even for HDVs,
- b) to restrict the obligation for external-cost charging of trucks and coaches only to "a part of the network" where the environmental damage generated is "the most significant",
- c) to exclude HDVs of less than 12 tonnes from tolling for eight more years.

Such an approach goes against the ambition to decarbonise transport outlined in the EU policy agenda.

CER is therefore calling on Transport Ministers to help implement user-pays and polluter-pays in transport by aligning themselves with the European Parliament's position, or at least the Commission's proposal for a revised Eurovignette Directive, in particular for art. 7(6), 7(8) and 7c(5).

CER Executive Director Libor Lochman said: *"There is no sustainable transport without fair competitive conditions for green modes like rail. CER is therefore urging Member States to revisit their stance on Eurovignette. At their meeting on 2 December, Transport Ministers should pave the way for tolling and external-cost charging on all major roads in Europe."*

Notes to the editor:

The European Parliament asked for marginal-cost pricing to implement the principles of user-pays and polluter-pays in transport in its resolution on low-emission mobility, item 18, of December 2017: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0503_EN.html?redirect

CER has made further recommendations for Member States to improve the Eurovignette Directive in a position paper of May 2019: <http://cer.be/publications/latest-publications/implementing-user-pays-and-polluter-pays-road-charging>

Specific enablers of a level playing field in transport, such as robust carbon pricing, are detailed in CER's recent recommendations for the upcoming European Green Deal: <http://cer.be/publications/latest-publications/rails-priorities-european-green-deal>

Contact Person

Eva Böckle
CER Head of Communications
E: eva.boeckle@cer.be
T: +32 (0)2 213 08 90
M: +32 (0) 473 32 20 94

About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 71% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) on Twitter.