



11 February 2009

**A large Group of Industry Associations on the results of the vote of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee on Eurovignette III:**

**A concerning dis-concert.**

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009 the Report on the Eurovignette Proposal (a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council amending Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures, so-called "Eurovignette III") was voted on in the Transport and Tourism (TRAN) Committee of the European Parliament.

The above European associations representing the interests of logistics, express, freight forwarder and road transport companies, manufacturers and retailers (i.e. shippers) jointly advocated for a re-thinking of the European Commission's strategy for greening transport for the benefit of both European industry and society, by stating their great concern regarding both the ineffectiveness of the Proposal to enhance road transport sustainability and its negative impact on competitiveness. Whilst they agree, in principle, with the objective of promoting sustainable road transport by internalising external costs, there is considerable doubt that the Proposal would actually deliver what it promised, i.e. greener transport.

Representing a very significant part of the industry, the listed associations are, therefore, more than perplexed about the results of the vote in the TRAN Committee. They consider that the position taken by the TRAN committee will send a signal that the road transport sector can still be seen by some as a source of money. However, at least, a new and additional charge related to CO2 emissions was not accepted, since CO2 is already covered by fuel taxes and double taxation should be avoided. On the issue of congestion the message sent by the TRAN Committee was clear in principle (congestion is a problem for everybody and trucks alone are neither the cause nor the

solution), but the measure proposed to tackle congestion is not appropriate or practical, since there is no legal basis in this directive for the EU to provide a fair charging system for all road users.

Despite the prevailing opinion within the industry that the EU needs a more articulated proposal, valid for all transport modes and based on sound and impeccable methodology, the TRAN Committee missed an opportunity to avoid that road transport becomes more costly (higher charges), less efficient (more dispersion) and more polluting (more vehicles with smaller loads and less money for renewing the fleet and for buying Intelligent Transport Systems enabling sustainable transport operations).

Split votes and an atmosphere of perceptible and quite understandable uncertainty suggest that this proposal is becoming more and more controversial.

Mr Michael Nielsen, the IRU General Delegate in Brussels, made the following comment: "Today, EP TRAN regretfully adopted its report on the proposal to revise the Eurovignette Directive despite the current economic crisis, thus proposing to add further costs on road transport and society. European politicians should rather dedicate their time and efforts to finding ways out of the crisis. Among other, the TRAN Committee failed to adopt a crystal clear and strong message on congestion which should be nothing less than calling for its exclusion from the scope of this Directive."

Ms Nicolette van der Jagt, Secretary General of the ESC, remarked that "the customers, my members, will be very disappointed by this vote. It will be seen for what it is: a slap in the face for common sense. If you don't have any viable alternative to road freight what else are you supposed to do? Freight is not the enemy here, so why are we in effect 'criminalising' it and issuing fines by way of unavoidable, so called 'user charges'?"

Mr. Xavier Durieu, Secretary General of EuroCommerce, added "although the vote is in the right direction, the directive remains detrimental for the commerce sector and in particularly for SMEs. As long as there are no other alternative modes of transport available and delivery times remain restricted, companies will have no other option than to pass on the costs down the supply chain. For the commerce sector, an optimal system for transport and logistics is an absolute necessity and unfortunately, as it currently stands, this directive falls short of this objective."

Ms Véronique Corduant, on behalf of the EEA, said that "the principle of better regulation is not fulfilled with this compromise vote since it creates complexity and provides inefficient measures to tackle the external costs of road transport, especially regarding congestion. Greener transport would be better achieved by completing the Internal Market, removing regulatory and administrative barriers for road freight transport services and allowing the use of more efficient and innovative vehicle concepts like the European Modular System."

Mr Tony Richman, from FEDEMAC, commented "we are disappointed to note the TRAN vote. The Removals Industry is suffering from both the current economic crisis and the very depressed 'housing market'. The few customers available are very price-conscious and this trend will continue even when matters do eventually return to some sort of normality. Inflicting higher prices upon removal services will do nothing to help the crisis or the intentions of the Proposals. Moving house can only be carried out practically by Road Removal Van: the Eurovignette will become a tax and a barrier to mobility, indirectly affecting people, employment and the industry itself. ... And we always thought that 'Freedom of Mobility of Persons And Goods throughout the Single Market' was at the heart of the EU ideal!"

Mr Marco Sorgetti of Clecat said: "The position of the TRAN Committee is nothing to jump for joy at: we are sceptical about the chances to tackle congestion without a wider debate, we fear earmarking will be forfeited in subsequent compromises and even interoperability could be still in peril. What will be left? Just more charges for road transport, no benefit for the environment and no benefit for the citizen."

Others made the following comments: "Some may argue that a fair level playing field between all modes of transport in infrastructure charging will be a long process, beyond the scope of the Eurovignette. However, all that we have now, and for years to come, is more costs for road transport, where is the rest?"

"Making road transport more costly, is the final result of this vote. In this economic period many road transport operators (especially SMEs) struggle to survive and there are no alternatives available for transport users."

In view of the split nature of some of the votes, the signatories of this press release jointly agree to renew their efforts in view of the debate and vote in the EP Plenary this coming spring.

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