



JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

Business organisations sceptical about revision of EUROVIGNETTE directive

Brussels, 1 December 2008 – Ahead of tomorrow's hearing at the European Parliament on the revision of the EUROVIGNETTE Directive, the European business organisations EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME warn about the risk of triggering a further increase in transport costs without achieving the desired environmental improvements.

Laudable aim but flawed approach

EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME share the main aim of the proposal – in the general sense of mitigating environmental and health-related side effects of transport. However, they regret that the proposal focuses only on the internalisation of external transport cost into road transport prices. The appropriate starting point should have been an examination of a wide range of policy measures to determine those capable of reducing external costs in the most efficient way – as this is the actual goal of sustainable transport policy.

An “unlimited licence to charge” for Member States?

Witnessing this lack of a genuine impact assessment evaluating all suitable policy options for a sustainable transport sector (such as acoustic barriers to reduce noise, or advantages for users of clean and efficient vehicles), EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME insist that the review should not give Member States a “licence to charge” for all external cost factors and - an element suggested by the Rapporteur - without any limit to the chargeable amount per km.

Adding a charge on heavy goods vehicles based on congestion, for example, will not considerably reduce traffic volumes on highways, as traffic jams are mainly due to temporary obstacles such as construction work and accidents, or to traffic peaks caused by passenger cars. Freight transport operators do not need this additional deterrent to avoid congested routes, as they already suffer from wasting time and fuel there; however, in many areas no alternative modes of transport or time slots are available. Last but not least, allowing - or even encouraging - Member States to charge higher tolls on congested stretches may have the perverse effect of tempting authorities to leave this problem unsolved and to exploit this source of revenue for their general budgets.

To ensure improvements in the environment and road infrastructure, Member States should at least be obliged to reinvest revenues from potential future charges to mitigate external effects in the sector which is asked to pay. Regarding this aspect, the Rapporteur's intention to strengthen the requirements for “earmarking” the generated revenue is a step in the right direction. EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME welcome the hearing as a positive signal of policymakers' willingness to continue the debate, which is certainly necessary to avoid taking the wrong turn on sustainable transport policy.

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Position paper:

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EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 19 million enterprises in Europe – 96% of which are SMEs – through members in 45 countries and a European network of 2000 regional and local Chambers.

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<http://www.eurocommerce.be/media/docs/Environment/finalEuroCommercePositionPaperRevisionEurovignetteDirective.doc>

EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations and companies in 31 European countries. Commerce plays a unique role in the European economy, acting as the link between manufacturers and the nearly 500 million consumers across Europe over a billion times a day. It is a dynamic and labour-intensive sector, generating 11% of the EU's GDP. Over 95% of the 6 million companies in commerce are small and medium-sized enterprises.

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Position paper:

http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/0811_EUROVIGNETTE_UEAPME_Position_Nov_2008.pdf

UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 83 member organisations, which represent crafts and SMEs across Europe, covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.
