



News Release

LORRY TOLLS VOTE COULD DELAY ACTION ON HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COSTS TO 2011

15/11/05 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRUSSELS T&E welcomes last night's European Parliament Transport Committee vote on rules that govern lorry tolls but expresses disappointment that inclusion of environmental and health costs could be delayed until 2011.

Markus Liechti of T&E said, "We welcome the transport committee's continued commitment to charging for the health and environmental damage caused by lorries but this unnecessary delay could leave European citizens paying a heavy price for up to five more years".

The impact of lorry transport on health and the environment costs EUR 170 bn every year(1) and inclusion of such 'external costs' in transport prices has been EU policy since it was agreed by European leaders at the Gothenburg summit in 2001. But there has been no legislative action on the issue.

The European Commission's July 2003 proposal to revise lorry toll rules in place since 1993 did not provide for the inclusion of environmental and health costs. But they were introduced by the European Parliament in its first vote on the legislation in 2004 only to be removed again by transport ministers in a vote in April 2005.

Liechti comments "The position of the parliament has been made very difficult by transport ministers' continued resistance on this issue. We now urge the parliament to stand firm during the negotiations with ministers that will follow the final parliamentary vote in December".

The parliament's transport committee voted last night to reintroduce external costs thanks to compromise amendments tabled by Dutch centre-right MEP Corien Wortmann-Kool. Under the compromise, the European Commission should propose, no later than two years after the new rules come into force, further revisions to include a methodology for the inclusion of external costs. Member States would automatically be allowed to include external costs representing up to 60% of infrastructure costs should the EU fail to approve the revised methodology within a further three years.

T&E believes that there is no need for a new methodology on charging for external costs because such a methodology already exists. This view was recently backed by 28 leading European economists in a letter to the Commission, transport ministers and the transport committee (2).

The European Parliament will take its final decision on the legislation in a plenary vote on 14 December. In addition European transport ministers will also have to approve the new rules.

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(1) EUR 170 Billion cost of environmental and health damage caused by lorries. Figures apply to EU25 minus Baltic states, Malta and Cyprus.

Sources:

- INFRAS/IWW, External costs of transport, Update study, Zurich/Karlsruhe, October 2004 www.infras.ch
- OECD, External costs of transport in Central and Eastern Europe, Paris, May 2003 (Poland, Hungary, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Czech Republic) www.oecd.org

(2) A copy of the 2 November open letter from European economists can be downloaded from:

http://www.t-e.nu/docs/Press/2005/2005_11_open_letter_scientists_on_eurovignette.pdf

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About T&E

T&E is Europe's principal environmental organisation campaigning specifically on transport. Members are drawn from NGOs in nearly every European country, all of whom promote a more environmentally sound approach to transport. www.t-e.nu