



EUROPA



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Eurovignette Directive: Extension of toll exemption for zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles

Executive Summary

On the content of the proposal:

The Eurovignette Directive (1999/62/EC as amended by EU/2022/362) lays down the principles for charging motor vehicles on motorways in Europe. Since its amendment in 2022, CO₂ criteria must also be taken into account for the first time when setting truck toll rates. Toll operators are required to either grant reductions of 50 to 75 per cent on toll rates for zero-emission commercial vehicles or levy toll surcharges for external CO₂ costs. Both options can be combined. In addition, a general toll exemption for low-emission commercial vehicles may be provided for until 31 December 2025. The Commission's current proposal now provides for the possibility of extending the general toll exemption until 1 July 2031. This is intended to comply with the Industrial Action Plan for the European Automotive Sector and help commercial vehicle manufacturers switch to zero-emission drives. In 2024, these accounted for only 3.9 per cent of all new registrations in the EU. However, according to the Commission, they should account for 5 to 9 per cent of the total commercial vehicle fleet by 2030.

Key Points

- AK rejects a general exemption from tolls for zero-emission commercial vehicles.
- Only toll surcharges for external CO₂ costs can ensure adequate infrastructure financing and promote decarbonisation.
- The special status of private toll concession companies must be ended.
- The proposal must be adopted in an ordinary EU legislative procedure.

AK's Position

The main provisions of the proposal:

AK rejects the Commission's proposal because it fails to contribute to the decarbonisation of road freight transport in Europe. It does not create a predictable framework that ensures the operation and maintenance of motorway infrastructure while providing incentives for the purchase of zero-emission commercial vehicles.

Truck tolls must always cover the costs of using the road infrastructure. This applies in particular to heavy zero-emission vehicles. Given their current low market share, a general exemption from tolls for zero-emission commercial vehicles may be negligible. In the long term, however, this could threaten the financing of infrastructure. It should also be noted that rail freight transport, which is much more climate-friendly, has to pay a usage fee to the rail infrastructure operator on all routes. For this reason, the framework in the Directive (Art. 7ga), which allows toll reductions of 50 to 70 per cent for zero-emission commercial vehicles, is more than sufficient. From AK's point of view, the option of favouring zero-emission commercial vehicles over fossil-fuel-powered vehicles by means of toll surcharges for external CO₂ costs (Article 7c) is clearly preferable. To this end, however, the CO₂ reference values in Annex III c should be raised significantly in order to ensure a market ramp-up of climate-friendly commercial vehicles.

Another key criticism levelled by AK is that the Commission only requires these support mechanisms for publicly owned infrastructure operators. Private motorway operators operating under concession agreements (Art. 7 (7)) are exempt from these obligations. This means that some large EU Member States (in particular Italy, France, Spain, but also Portugal) are not contributing to the ramp-up of zero-emission commercial vehicles. It is not clear why concessionary motorway operators cannot levy a toll surcharge for external CO₂ costs. This point should be revised at the latest when the Directive is comprehensively revised on 24 March 2027.

Furthermore, the failures of European vehicle manufacturers do not justify this proposal being adopted in an urgent procedure. The ordinary EU legislative procedure must be followed.



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About us

The Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK) is the legal body which represents the interests of approximately 4 million employees and consumers in Austria. It represents its members on all social, educational, economic and consumer policy-related issues at national level and at EU level in Brussels. Furthermore, the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour is a part of the Austrian social partnership. The Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour is registered at the EU Transparency Register under the number 23869471911-54.

The main objectives of the 1991 established AK EUROPA Office in Brussels are the representation of AK vis-à-vis the European Institutions and interest groups, the monitoring of EU policies and to transfer relevant information from Brussels to Austria, as well as to lobby the in Austria developed expertise and positions of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour in Brussels.