

EUROVIGNETTE vote: **Mixed results, say business organisations**

European business organisations UEAPME Transport Forum, EUROCHAMBRES and EuroCommerce were left with mixed feelings by the signal emanating from today's contradictory voting results on the EUROVIGNETTE directive at the European Parliament's plenary session.

MEPs voted on charging road freight transport for its negative environmental impacts. The three business organisations welcome that the EP rejected attempts to include even more environmental costs in the basis for charging. Problems such as CO2 emissions are being tackled by other means – notably the already high fuel duties – and should not be addressed through this proposal.

However, the Parliament has taken a very confusing and regrettable position on charges for congestion. The vote has maintained that Member States can charge for congestion, but appears to have rejected all text on a common model for calculation, and on Member States having to first propose a detailed action plan on possible infrastructure improvements as had been outlined in the TRAN committee's report.

This result is not satisfactory. A main purpose of this proposal is to introduce common methodology and transparency. Now Parliament seems to be leaving it completely free for Member States to do what they want with respect to congestion fees.

The cause of traffic jams on European roads is not heavy goods vehicles but lack of alternatives and insufficient road infrastructure, as well as temporary obstacles due to road construction works. Hauliers already try to avoid being caught up in congestion, as this wastes time and fuel. Thus the extra fee would not solve the problem but increase operating costs for businesses in Europe – among them many SMEs – who depend on transport as a crucial link for their economic activities.

The three organisations now call upon the Member States in the Council to introduce the basic principles of the internal market on transparency, common methodologies, joint caps and make it clear that congestion cost should not be added to the EUROVIGNETTE directive.

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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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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.

UEAPME Transport Forum

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The UEAPME Transport Forum is a co-operation platform bringing together small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the transport sector as well as the transport branches of several members of UEAPME, the employers' organisation representing the interests of European crafts, trades and SMEs at EU level.