

Recovering unpaid road tolls will become easier across Europe – Council approves provisional deal

It will soon become easier for member states to **trace people who fail to pay road fees**, even when their vehicles are registered in another EU country. A new information-sharing system allowing this is included in the **updated electronic road toll rules** that member states' ambassadors approved today in the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee. A provisional deal was reached by the presidency and the European Parliament on 20 November.

This reform puts all road users on an equal footing when it comes to paying road fees. It also makes electronic tolling systems more interoperable and therefore more cost-efficient and user-friendly.

Norbert Hofer, Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria, President of the Council

Under the reform, national authorities will have access to other member states' national vehicle registration data in order to identify owners of vehicles for which road fees have not been paid. The information exchange relates to fees to be paid electronically or manually for using road infrastructure. The possible administrative or legal consequences will depend on the national law of the country where the fee was left unpaid.

The new rules will also remove administrative barriers, such as local technical specifications, and give electronic tolling providers easier access to the toll collection market.

The new measures will become applicable 30 months after the entry into force of the directive.

This is the first proposal in the three mobility packages to be agreed on between the Council and the Parliament.

Next steps

Once the agreed text has undergone legal and linguistic finalisation it must be formally adopted, first by the Parliament and then by the Council. Following adoption, the directive will be published in the EU's Official Journal.

The text of the draft directive will soon be available on this webpage.

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Long-term strategy: press conference by Maroš Šefčovič

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under this mandate, we have focused primarily on **what needs to be done** for the clean energy transition **between now and 2030**. And by the end of it, **we will have delivered** on all our commitments.

The **policies put in place so far** will go a long way – even after 2030 – but they **will only bring us to emission reductions of around 60% by 2050**. This is not sufficient for the EU to contribute to the Paris Agreement's temperature goals.

Today, we are **therefore looking further ahead** – towards 2050 and towards a climate neutral Europe – **not only to contribute but to lead on the Paris' goals**.

Climate change is already affecting Europe. For instance, we had **extreme heat waves in four of the last five years**. Last year's **weather-related disasters cost us unprecedented EUR 283 billion** in economic damages.

Status quo is not an option!

Today, we are taking **a first serious step towards climate neutrality**.

In fact, the European Union is **the first major economy** that is presenting its **strategy for economic and societal transformation** – involving all sectors – **that could lead to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**.

We have identified **a number of strategic building blocks that can pave the way** towards a climate neutral economy – *and Miguel will describe them in a greater detail*.

You won't be surprised that **energy plays a central role**, as it accounts for over 75% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions.

For instance, by **maximising the deployment of renewables** – making them the backbone of our power system – **over 80% of electricity will be coming from renewables by 2050**.

This will pay off and bring down our **fossil fuel imports from 55% to 20%** – as a result, we will **save EUR 2-3 trillion** after 2030. Instead of paying third countries for energy that we only burn, we can **invest into modern, cleaner industry** that provide high quality local jobs.

We will be **stepping up renovation of our buildings** and **heat them with renewable energy**, instead of polluting fossil fuels.

The **renewable electricity** – in combination with European green batteries and alongside other alternative fuels – **will also power our bikes, buses, cars or trains**. This will bring **healthier air** and again **investment into European industry**.

Speaking of industry, we now know that **industry can and is ready to decarbonise**, too. This will require **investment into more electrification, use of hydrogen, biomass and renewable synthetic fuels**.

All of this will see **the necessary infrastructure in place**, for instance smart electricity and data grids, smart charging, including vehicle-to-grid technology.

And I'm particularly proud that **social fairness in this strategy is not an afterthought** but we will make sure that **no one is left behind in the first place** – as we are already doing with coal regions in transition.

Green jobs in the EU already amount to 4 million but for some sectors, the transition can be difficult and we will need to **invest massively into upskilling**.

The key to success is that **all sectors pitch in**, as we will be **actively paving the way for this major modernisation** of our economy – be it industry, transport or land and agriculture. But we also need innovation, finance, circular economy, trade.

It is under this Commission when **we have learnt how to better integrate various policies into the Energy Union**. And I reiterate that **once and for all**, we have to **break walls among sectors** during this transformation towards climate neutrality.

This will require **significant additional investment**. We estimate that we will need additional investments **in the range of EUR 175 to 290 billion per year**, if we want to achieve a net zero greenhouse gas economy.

But **we will also be saving money** on fossil fuel imports, energy efficiency, health expenditure from air pollution or the circular economy.

Moreover, we have already proven that it is **possible to grow and cut emissions at the same time**. From 1990 to 2017, energy use was reduced by almost 2%, greenhouse gas emissions by 22%, while our GDP grew by 58%.

We want to **be and can be the global leader!** The global economy is already transforming and having this **strategy will help us reap the benefits of first mover**.

The necessary investment will be **too high for the public sector** to provide alone. But we will **make sure that the incentives are right** and enable the private sector and the financial system to contribute.

We will therefore foster such investment, through **clear, long-term signals**, like this strategy.

So as you can see, we are providing **a clear sense of direction**. But at the same time, **this is an opening salvo for a thorough debate** across our societies because we need an **early long-term planning**.

In the run up to the Sibiu summit on the Future of Europe, all relevant **Council formations should hold policy debates** on ways to contribute to this vision.

But one thing is already clear – **a planet with a climate that's out of control** would **not be a safe and prosperous home**. And therefore, we have to act!

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