



1st IRU/EU Presidency Road Transport Conference & Ministerial Meeting  
“Efficient, Safe and Sustainable Road Transport for the Future”  
Brussels, Belgium, 1 December 2010  
The Square Meeting Centre

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**Opening Session**

**How can more efficient, safe and sustainable road transport even better serve EU citizens?**

**Brian Simpson**, Chair, Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament

It is a pleasure for me to be here at the first IRU/EU Conference. I think it's a very good idea to dedicate this conference to the future of efficient, safe sustainable road transport.

However, it might not be a home match for me as chairman of the TRAN Committee, when I think of one particular and very controversial dossier, which is currently being negotiated between Council and Parliament.

But before coming back to the famous 'Eurovignette' and before trying to answer the question of how road transport can even better serve the citizens - let me stress that road transport already served the EU citizens in the past decades.

The history and the development of the European Union and the Single Market are unthinkable without efficient and competitive road freight transport delivering the goods.

Transport in general is the backbone of our Single Market and road transport will continue to be the dominant and a very flexible mode of freight transport in the future. The same goes for road passenger transport being crucial for the free movement of people.

In addition, road transport is of course also an economic factor itself, contributing to economic growth and employment. But it is also highly sensitive to, and dependent on, economic developments in other sectors. We know that the **economic downturn** hit the road transport sector significantly.

Today's question is how road transport can serve the citizens even **better**:  
Let me mention 3 elements:

Firstly, we have to face it: road freight transport must become much more sustainable.

I very much welcome the 2009 IRU Resolution on a voluntary commitment of the road transport industry to reduce CO2 emissions by 30% by 2030. It shows the commitment of IRU Members in regards to sustainability.

But if you ask me how road transport can become more sustainable, I must say: The revision Eurovignette-Directive is an essential element of this development.

I know, that this opinion might not be very popular among the IRU Members here in this room, and of course I know that there are a lot of concerns when it comes to the potential impact of the "Eurovignette" on your business strategies. And I also know that IRU presented figures in regards to the cost of the 'Eurovignette' - which are going far beyond the calculations presented by the large majority of academics and by the Commission.

I think we should be realistic and we should not exaggerate:

The new Eurovignette will not be like Dracula at the Carotid Artery of IRU Members sucking them dry. The EU does not have any interest in doing so and cannot afford it. The EU needs a competitive road transport sector as the backbone of the Single Market.

But we also need a more sustainable road transport sector.

It is not Brian Simpson alone advocating the internalisation of external costs. It is the Commission, it is the Council and it is the European Parliament.

There is also a very broad academic consensus that the transport system can only be economically efficient if transport prices reflect all costs. And there is also an overwhelming academic consensus that external costs are measurable can be quantified and can be internalised. The figures calculated in the various studies are ready for policy use.

To me **CCAP** - the cheapest cost avoider principle as proposed by IRU will **not** solve the problem. The Polluter Pays principle is the right way of tackling the problem of external costs.

The European Parliament adopted its first reading on this directive in March 2009. In principle, it supported the Commission's approach. Therefore, Parliament recognised the feasibility of external costs calculation methods for heavy goods vehicles, as well as the need to internalise these costs. I very much welcome the efforts of the Belgian Presidency to reach a political agreement in Council, and I consider this a big success and a major step in the right direction. However, the final negotiations with Council are expected to be difficult in view of the remaining issues of this dossier.

But I am optimistic, and hope that Council and European Parliament reach an agreement very soon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has come to develop a true sustainable perspective for our road freight transport, and I am pretty sure that road freight operators also have an interest in becoming more sustainable, in improving their environmental reputation compared to other modes of transport.

A major step for this development is the revision of the Eurovignette in order to take into account external costs. This will push the developments in regards to better and more efficient lorries as well. We need more innovation in terms of technology - there is still a huge potential to be discovered.

Furthermore, we need a fair competition between the modes. Let me assure you that we must also calculate the external costs of the other modes of transport, once we have adopted the Eurovignette-revision.

We need a level playing field, fair competition not only between but also **within** the different modes of transport.

**Safety** is the second element I want to mention.

Our citizens do have a right to safe road transport. And EU has done a lot in recent years. But the safety record of commercial road transport must be improved further.

For commercial road transport the legislative framework has been more or less set. In my view, EU should now focus on enforcement and implementation of existing rules.

I strongly believe that a strong policy of enforcement in road transport in all Member States and cross-border enforcement is clearly in the interest of the large majority of road transport operators who respect the rules.

The small **minority** disrespecting the rules is distorting competition. These transport operators must not have an advantage. I can only repeat what I recently said at the Road Safety Days. We must make sure we have the best legislative environment enforceable rules and, in case of an offence, punishments which are appropriate and dissuasive.

This is in the interest of the citizens and also in the interest of the large majority of honest transport operators, because it contributes to fair competition.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is already a very sustainable, efficient and very safe form of road transport: **bus and coach travel**.

The legislative framework is set, and if legislation proves to be inappropriate and not practical, Parliament will listen and can be convinced to deal with it and to change it - as it was recently the case with the famous 12-days rule.

The safety record of buses and coaches is very good and the environmental performance of the vehicles is constantly improving. The only thing that is really missing in the legislative framework are - and this is my third point - **passenger rights**.

Clearly, it would be nonsensical and unfair to have passenger rights in other modes of transport but not for buses and coaches.

The EP's position is: we cannot accept the exclusion of the vast majority of bus and coach services from the scope of this regulation. We cannot accept the weakening of the rights of people with reduced mobility also in this regulation. This mode of transport should not be treated differently to any other.

Parliament has a good record in defending passenger rights. A couple of months ago I was quite disappointed with the development of this piece of legislation, but now it seems that we are close to an agreement.

(some words on the current state of play of the negotiations)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To sum up: Efficient, sustainable and safe road transport is indispensable. Road transport for passengers and freight is an essential and irreplaceable service to our citizens and to our economy. But it must and it can be improved.

Although, IRU and TRAN Committee might have different views on some current legislative dossiers, let me assure you that the TRAN Committee is always open to new ideas and

proposals in order to improve our road transport, knowing and very much appreciating IRU's efforts, expertise and experience.