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Kilometer charge step by step via alternative route

Whatever Government will be formed in the Netherlands, both the chance that the Kilometerprijs will be introduced as it has been proposed, and the chance that nothing will be done against road congestion and the emission of CO₂ and fine dust will be very small.

The current situation looks like a deadlock. The accessibility, the legal provisions to protect the environment and the recent reports of the OECD and the Council for Traffic and Water management suggest that an instrument for regulating traffic will be necessary shortly. And now Kilometerprijs in the proposed form is no longer an option, there is room for alternatives.

A well tested method looking for alternatives is looking across the border. In Germany for example a discussion has come up on how to raise money to finance the infrastructure. One of the possible options is a time related virtual vignette on motorways. In Germany this is to be considered a serious option because it can be introduced relatively fast and at low costs. No on board unit and no expensive road side equipment will be required. Also the Government does not have to invest in the infrastructure for levying the charge, the investment costs will be absorbed in the monthly fee. A very attractive proposition for a Government that lacks cash.

Also within the Netherlands such a system could be introduced to reduce congestion and to combat high emission values. Depending on the tariff structure chosen introduction of the virtual vignette on motorways will instantly lead to less kilometers driven, and thus to less congestion and to less emission. Simultaneously the motor vehicle tax can be reduced with the amount that is to be expected as revenues from the vignette. This will create room for a further discussion on mobility whilst the first steps on the road to the set targets for the desired accessibility and environmental goals.

The most significant down side is that the goals set, less traffic jams and paying for road use and not for owning the car, will only be realized partially, but then again it is a first step.

Nevertheless a virtual vignette on motorways as an instrument against traffic jams and emission is worth looking at because not just the technique has been tested in several countries, but also because a specific variant of this system in fact is operational within the Netherlands, collecting the tax on heavy goods vehicles (Eurovignette).

Reasons enough to look seriously at the virtual vignette as a - temporary- option for electronic levying on motorways, so that Kilometerprijs will no longer need to be a potential breaking point in the running coalition talks.

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