



European Communities
Commission
Press Release

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COMMISSION PRESSURES U.K. TO USE TACHOGRAPH

Second Step in Legal Proceedings

The Commission of the European Communities decided today to give notice to the British Government that it must conform to the Community regulation requiring the use of the tachograph in heavy lorries and coaches within two months - or face the prospect of action in the European Court of Justice.

The Commission - meeting in Strasbourg where the European Parliament is currently sitting - decided to issue an "Avis Motive" or Reasoned Opinion which will:

1. State that the British Government is in breach of its obligations incumbent upon it by virtue of the Regulation (1463/70) on the introduction of the tachograph;
2. Invite the Government to take the required measures to conform to this notice within two months.

Following the reply of the British Government, the Member of the Commission responsible for Transport, Mr Richard Burke, will report back to the Commission together with, if necessary, an eventual recommendation for action before the Court of Justice.

The issue of a Reasoned Opinion is the second stage in the legal procedure when a Government is regarded as infringing its obligations. The Commission sent a "mise en demeure" or warning letter to the British Government on October 21, giving Britain 30 days to reply. The Government made its substantive reply on January 10.

In fact, apart from certain exceptions, the tachograph has been required by Community law on all new heavy goods and passenger vehicles and all vehicles carrying dangerous goods, since January 1, 1976, and on all heavy goods and passenger vehicles since January 1 this year.

The main exemptions - apart from public service vehicles such as refuse carts, highway repair vehicles, ambulances, police cars and suchlike - are vehicles of less than 6 tonnes working within a radius of 50 kilometres (32 miles) these two categories are also required to employ the tachograph from July 1, 1979.

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In an oral statement today, the Spokesman for the Commission said it was clear from previous correspondence and discussions that the United Kingdom had no intention of putting into force the existing tachograph regulation. The principle reasons given were the same as before, that the obligatory introduction of the tachograph would upset relations with both sides of the road transport industry and involve an increase in drivers' wages which would go beyond the limits fixed by the Government in its battle against inflation. The Commission carefully examined these elements before opening procedures against the U.K.

In fact, the tachograph itself would not have any effect on drivers' wages; it is a control device which accurately monitors working periods off and on the wheel and speeds. Drivers' hours under the amended social Regulation 543/69 have already been accepted by the British Government which is putting them into effect during the next three years.

Continental drivers have no complaints against the tachograph. In West Germany, in particular, drivers regard it as an effective barrier against exploitation of drivers to achieve deliveries.

Any Continental drivers of heavy vehicles on British roads already use the tachograph, as do all British drivers on European journeys. About 70,000 heavy vehicles in Britain already use the tachograph.

The Commission's Reasoned Opinion will be sent to the British Government in a few days.

The Commission also decided yesterday to issue the first warning letter to the Irish Government for its failure to implement the tachograph regulation.

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