



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

COMPETITIVENESS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS



06.03.09

European automotive industry

COM (2009) 104 – Communication from the Commission "Responding to the crisis in the European automotive industry"

The European automotive industry is one of Europe's flagship industries. It is a key driver of growth, exports, innovation and jobs. Its impact filters down across a wide variety of other sectors. And it has a particularly important cross border reach, with suppliers, manufacturers and sales and servicing downstream creating a web of mutual interest that touches every one of the EU's Member States.

The Commission believes that the EU needs a dynamic and competitive automotive sector. The economic crisis has put the automotive sector under particular pressure. Properly targeted support is needed to help the industry and its workforce through the downturn and to address structural problems by making the sector more competitive and more in tune with the needs of the future.

This communication sets out how the EU can bring policy levers into play to support the automotive industry. It represents a European framework for action: a framework which sets out how both the EU level and Member States can take the decisive measures needed. Different Member States will use different mixes of action to address the needs of manufacturers, suppliers, retailers and workers, whilst working within a common EU framework.



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Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock

COM (2009) 94 - Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing by the European Community of the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock, adopted in Luxembourg on 23 February 2007

The Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and the Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment lays down uniform rules for the constitution and effects of an international interest (security agreement, title reservation agreement or leasing agreement) in certain categories of mobile equipment designated in the Protocols relating to aircraft, railway rolling stock and space assets.

The Protocol in question is intended to facilitate the financing of high-value railway rolling stock by creating a particularly strong international guarantee for creditors (sellers on credit and institutions supplying credit for such sales) which gives them priority over these assets in an international register.

Such instrument, to which many of the Community's main trading partners are party, is likely to be of great benefit to the European rail industry, banks and Governments by encouraging capital investment in the rail sector and boosting the creation of a genuine lease market. Before the Community can benefit from it, however, it must sign and ratify the Rail Protocol. Thus, in this document the Commission is proposing that the Council take a decision that the Community sign the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock.

Annual Policy Strategy

COM(2009) 73 – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Annual Policy Strategy for 2010

This Annual Policy Strategy paves the way for establishing a policy agenda for 2010 and launches the inter-institutional dialogue on the priorities for next year.



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In the field of consumer protection, further steps will be taken to improve and ensure consumer safety. Passing the 2008 Pharmaceuticals package into law will help to ensure safe medicines for patients while safeguarding the competitiveness of the sector. The Commission will pursue its joint action with the US and Chinese authorities on product safety and extend it to other countries. The impending entry into force of the directive on toys safety will see these efforts intensify. The Commission will continue to monitor markets and outcomes for consumers and reflection will continue on how the consumer *acquis* can be better enforced, building on the communication to be submitted in 2009. The Commission will also follow up on the 2008 Green Paper on consumer redress in relation to collective claims.

Better regulation will remain the hallmark of the Commission's work. For existing legislation, an integrated simplification approach will examine the overall effectiveness of the regulatory framework by policy area. In parallel, the Commission will address those areas identified in the 2009 better regulation package as having simplification potential. The Commission will also continue to vigorously pursue the reduction of administrative burdens in order to reach the agreed reduction target of 25% by 2012. To ensure that new legislation is of the highest possible quality, it will continue to apply the recently reinforced impact assessment system and improve the use of evaluation results.

Work under the European Transparency Initiative will be taken forward. Following the 2009 review of the Register for Interest Representatives ("lobbyists register"), a "one-stop-shop" register agreed with the European Parliament could be implemented. The Commission will also continue to improve transparency regarding the end beneficiaries of EU funds.

European Consumer Day 2009 - 13 March 2009

Since 1999 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organises an annual event, the European Consumer Day, in close cooperation with the European Commission and the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This year's event is a significant one as the EU will celebrate the **10th anniversary of the European Consumer Day**.

The key theme of the event will be **Consumer rights**, a subject that is currently of crucial importance for both European consumers and businesses as they try to fully benefit from Europe's Single Market.



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The Commission and retail sector launch Retail Forum to promote more sustainable consumption

The European Commission and the European retail sector have launched a Retail Forum as part of their drive to promote more environmentally sustainable consumption patterns. The event will involve producers, consumers and environment groups. The creation of the Retail Forum represents a significant contribution in the implementation of the EU Action Plan on sustainable consumption and production and sustainable industrial policy. The Forum aims to reduce the environmental impact of the retail sector and its supply chain, promote more sustainable products and better inform consumers about 'green' purchasing opportunities.

The Forum aims to generate a better understanding of the practical measures needed to promote sustainable consumption and production. Over time the result should be greater availability of environment-friendly and energy-efficient products in the shops and better information to consumers on how to use products in the most ecological way.

Participants will share best practice, discuss how to promote sustainable consumption and tackle barriers that hinder it, and obtain scientific information from relevant bodies to help evaluate environmentally sound products.

The rationale behind the Forum is that retailers are in a position to promote more sustainable consumption through their own actions, through their partnerships with suppliers, and through their daily contact with European consumers. Working with these stakeholders through a single, cross-cutting forum will make it possible to cover a wider range of products than a sectoral initiative.

Membership and participation

Membership of the Forum is voluntary and open to all retailers who join the Retailers' Environmental Action Plan (REAP) which includes many company-specific environmental commitments. The Commission's DG Environment will monitor the retailers' achievements.

Participation in the Forum is open to all relevant stakeholders wishing to contribute to its work, such as producers, suppliers and consumer and environmental



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ONLINE SHOPPING

Consumers: Online shopping increasingly popular in the EU, but development "held back" by barriers to cross border trade

A new report on "Barriers to E-commerce", presented yesterday by EU Consumer Commissioner Meglena Kuneva shows that online shopping is increasingly popular in the EU, but warns that barriers to cross border trade are holding back its development. The report presents a detailed analysis of current trends in e-commerce across the EU. Between 2006 and 2008 the proportion of EU consumers buying at least one item over the internet increased from 27% to 33%. These average figures mask the huge popularity of online shopping in countries like UK, France and Germany where more than 50% of internet users have made online purchases in the last year. In the Nordic countries the proportion of internet users who bought products and services online was 91% in 2008. Countries like Italy and Spain are also fast growing markets. Against this pattern of fast growing national markets, the extent of online purchasing cross border remains small, at only 7% in 2008 (compared to 6% in 2006). The report warns that numerous obstacles - linguistic, practical and regulatory as well as important trust issues - are holding back the development of online shopping in the EU.

For the main findings of the report [click here](#)

CONSULTATION NOTE

The European Parliament is holding public consultations on the proposed directive on consumer rights (COM (2008) 614)

The Parliament's Internal Market Committee would like to hear your views by 13 March 2009. These can be sent (in any one of the EU's 23 official languages) to: **consumer.rights@europarl.europa.eu**



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CONSULTATION NOTE

Proposals for eco-design and labelling requirements for refrigerating appliances, televisions, washing machines and dishwashers

The minimum energy efficiency and energy labelling requirements for:

- Household refrigeration appliances (including refrigerators, freezers, refrigerator cellars and wine storage appliances;
- Televisions which include televisions with a remote tuner and television monitors; and
- **Washing machines and dishwashers for household use:**

Will imply that these CANNOT be placed on the market unless they meet certain minimum energy efficiency criteria and must have the appropriate energy label affixed to them at the point of sale

Kindly send any comments to the Malta Standards Authority (info@msa.org.mt) by 11 March (household refrigeration appliances), 13 March (televisions), 27 March (washing machines & dishwashers)

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

A Council meeting on matters of Competitiveness is currently being held in Brussels (between the 5th and 6th March 2009). The main conclusions reached yesterday are the following:

The Council adopted a "key issues paper" on competitiveness and conclusions on the review of the single market, in preparation of the next Spring European Summit.

The Council also adopted conclusions in support of the automotive industry.