

Campagne Européenne
pour la Liberté du Marché
des Pièces de Rechange
et de la Réparation Automobile

Die europäische Bewegung
für die Freiheit
des Kfz-Ersatzteile-
und Kfz-Reparatur-Marktes

The European Campaign
for the Freedom
of the Automotive Parts
and Repair Market



PRESS RELEASE

European Economic and Social Committee backs Commission proposal to grant EU consumers free and fair car repairs

Brussels, 09.06.2005. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) yesterday decided to back the European Commission's proposal to allow free competition in the market for visible automotive spare parts (such as body panels, lamps, windscreens). This market is worth annually 12 to 13 billion Euro in the 25 member states. A clear majority of the Committee's members supported the proposal.

The Committee, which represents industry and trade, trade unions, SMEs and consumers, rejected the report submitted by Rapporteur Virgilio Ranocchiaro (Group I/ Confindustria-Italy) which argued for the introduction of a 5 years monopoly period. Eliminating competition from this market for 5 years would have resulted in a serious threat to the very survival of independent parts producers, distributors and repairers. In practice, the Ranocchiaro report would have ensured that car manufacturers became monopoly suppliers of body-integrated automotive spare parts.

A now adopted counter-opinion, which was proposed by Prof. Heiko Steffens (Group III, AgV, Germany) and Jorge Pegado Liz (Group III, DECO, Portugal) supports the Commission proposal to amend the "Design" Directive 98/71 by introducing a so-called "freedom of repairs clause".

The EESC's Opinion underlines that the repairs clause "does not affect the acquisition and the exercise of design rights where they operate as they should; it only stops the exercise of design rights where – as is the case in the repair sector – they cannot operate as they should. In this way the repairs clause prevents monopolies from coming into existence, competitors from being driven from the market and consumers from being subjected to the dictate of pricing by a sole supplier."

ECAR chairman and European insurance industry association (CEA) representative Ulf Lemor welcomed the Committee's decision. "ECAR appreciates the positive signal in favour of free competition in the market of vehicle servicing and repair. The Committee's Opinion protects innovation, favours investment in the EU, guarantees affordable mobility for 250 European million motorists, sustains employment in the EU, strengthens the competitiveness of the automotive sector as a whole and offers thousands of SMEs a chance to compete."

The Commission proposal is currently being debated by the European Parliament. It will be on the agenda of the Internal Market Committee and the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee in June and July.

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About ECAR

Established in 1993, The European Campaign for the Freedom of the Automotive Parts and Repair Market (ECAR) is an alliance of 10 independent EU organisations representing vehicle parts, producers, distributors, independent repairers, the European motor insurance industry, a large cross section of small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the 250 million motorists in the European Union. ECAR's main objective is to promote free competition and to prevent vehicle makers from monopolising the vehicle spare parts market through abuse of design protection.

More information

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