

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



## European Parliament moves to grant consumers free and fair car repairs “*Safety and design are unrelated issues*”, Key Committee told

**Brussels, 22 April 2005** – The European Parliament’s Legal Committee yesterday heard arguments supporting ECAR’s case that the European Commission’s proposal to complete the single market for automotive visible spare parts will benefit consumers and employment. The car industry’s argument that this could threaten safety was rejected by the experts present.

“In the UK, prices dropped by 40% when the market was liberalised”, said the Comité Européen des Assurances, supporting a variety of studies showing that spare parts are cheaper in countries with a free market. “Keeping a spare parts monopoly is particularly unfair to the owners of older cars, who would subsidise the owners of newer, more valuable cars”, said CEA representative Mme Spiquel, who added that she “expects liberalisation to have a positive impact on the evolution of insurance premiums”.

Other benefits for consumers of a liberalised market were highlighted by Mr. Ulrich May, representing ADAC, Europe’s largest motor driver association with 15 million members in Germany. This was demonstrated by Germany’s experience, a *de facto* free market whose spare parts prices are, according to a study commissioned by the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA), 10% lower than the European average.

ECAR’s Dr Gerhard Riehle said that a monopoly would gravely damage European employment, especially in the SME sector. “Foreign and EU car makers already import about 40% of their part requirements from low-cost, non-EU countries”, he said, adding that “independent imports, in comparison, are a mere 0.5% of the EU market”. The monopoly resulting from design protection would add a further incentive for the vehicle industry to delocalise production to low-wage countries.

The meeting highlighted that design protection and safety are unrelated issues. All witnesses called by the Committee to comment on this issue, except the ACEA representative, agreed that the only effective legal tool to guarantee safety is the type approval procedure, which imposes safety-related technical specifications (it has already been in use for decades to insure that really safety-critical spare parts, such as brakes, are truly safe). “To ensure safety, we must decide what parts are critical to safety, have them tested under realistic conditions and, if they pass these tests, grant them a type approval mark,” said Professor Dieter Anselm of the Allianz Zentrum für Technik.

The Committee’s Rapporteur, Alexander Radwan MEP, concluded the proceedings by agreeing with the experts that safety was an important issue, and by promising to seek a common position from the three parliamentary committees involved.

### 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 235 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

For more information, visit [www.ecar-eu.com](http://www.ecar-eu.com), or contact:

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