

## The 'Internet of Things on Wheels'

Independent Automotive Aftermarket rallies EU Parliamentary support for fair competition and consumers' freedom of choice in the Digital Single Market

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*27 October 2015.* FIGIEFA, the European association of independent automotive aftermarket distributors, together with the sector associations gathered in AFCAR, held a workshop at the European Parliament to inform its Members (MEPs) on how digitalisation will, without urgent action from the EU legislator, have adverse effects on fair competition and consumers' freedom of choice in the automotive aftermarket. MEPs were urged to ensure that the existing parts, servicing and repair markets are not foreclosed through the technological 'backdoor', whereby almost all vehicle data would be exclusively channelled to vehicle manufacturers with the new telematics technology. Only a truly interoperable, standardised, secure and open-access telematics platform, as mandated by the eCall Regulation, can ensure that consumers can freely choose their preferred service provider.

The "Digital Single Market Strategy" is the EU's strategy to make the EU's single market fit for the digital age, tearing down regulatory walls and online barriers so that consumers and businesses can fully benefit from the digital age. This technological revolution already exists and is evident in all markets, including the automotive sector. Whereas FIGIEFA welcomes the new technological advances and its benefits for consumers, this same technology would also erect new barriers to free competition if in-vehicle telematics systems continue to be designed in a closed and proprietary manner.

To inform MEPs about the need for regulatory framework to ensure consumer choice and free competition in the automotive aftermarket, FIGIEFA, in cooperation with other organisations representing consumer organisations and the entire independent automotive aftermarket, organised the "Internet of Things on Wheels" workshop, under the kind patronage of MEPs Róża Thun (EPP, Poland) and Evelyn Gebhardt (S&D, Germany).

Laurianne Krid, Director at the FIA Region I, and representing the motorist, highlighted the key elements to ensure consumer acceptance, namely informed consent and data protection, the right to choose the preferred service provider, and fair competition in the marketplace to enable the creation of competitive and innovative products.

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Sylvia Gotzen, Secretary General of FIGIEFA, pleaded for a more inclusive definition of 'platforms of things' in the EU's Digital Single Market Strategy, to take into account how platforms are already developing in the real world. "The possibility of independent service providers to maintain their ability to innovate and compete also in the digital era and to allow the development of competitive 'connected' services and products must be ensured. The level playing field currently enshrined in EU legislation (Block Exemption, Euro 5) needs updating for the digital age, and the Digital Single Market Strategy must be alive to this issue."

Neil Pattemore, Technical Director of both FIGIEFA and sister association EGEA, said, "There is no technical reason for the channelling of vehicle data to one recipient, nor any legitimate security or safety concern. 'Platforms of things' can be designed and made to correspond to the principles of openness, company data protection, competition and consumer choice in the digital era, whilst ensuring equal rights for all economic stakeholders – all that is needed is the political will and awareness."

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### Notes to the editor

#### About FIGIEFA

FIGIEFA is the European federation and political representative in Brussels of the independent wholesalers and retailers of automotive replacement parts and their associated repair chains. Together with its 19 national European members it represents the interests of more than 30.000 companies trading with vehicle parts, components and accessories. With a European supply network of more than 50.000 outlets and their 355.000 employees, FIGIEFA's members provide an efficient regional delivery of replacement parts to ensure that the consumer can get rapidly back on the road.

[www.figiefa.eu](http://www.figiefa.eu)

#### About AFCAR

AFCAR - Alliance for the Freedom of Car Repair in the EU. Created in 1997, AFCAR is an alliance of the independent European associations with the aim is to promote fair competition in the market for vehicle servicing and repair. Members of AFCAR are: AIRC (Association International Réparateurs en Carrosserie), CECRA (European Council for Motor Trades and Repair), EGEA (European Garage Equipment Association), FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) and FIGIEFA (International Federation of Automotive Aftermarket Distributors).

#### About the Automotive Aftermarket

The automotive industry is divided into two sectors, vehicle manufacturing and the "aftermarket", dealing with parts, servicing and repair markets. Approximately 6.5 million

people are employed in the automotive sector as a whole in the EU, of which 3.5 million in the aftermarket. The aftermarket includes the OEM franchised network but also independent multi-brand operators (tool and part manufacturers, distributors, data publishers, road side patrols, independent garages etc). It is the existence of the independent multi-brand value chain which ensures competitive pressure and consumer choice, leading to affordable mobility for 260m vehicle owners in the EU

### Digital Single Market Strategy

The “Digital Single Market Strategy” (COM(2015) 192 final) is the EU’s strategy to make the EU’s single market fit for the digital age, tearing down regulatory walls and online barriers so that consumers and businesses can fully benefit from the digital age.

<http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/>

### eCall Regulation

eCall is a system whereby in the event of a serious accident, Europe's single emergency number is dialled automatically, leading to faster response times from the emergency services. eCall requires telematics systems to be fitted in all new type approved vehicles from 2018, encouraging the creation of other telematics services using the same base system. Article 12 (2) of the eCall Regulation ((EU) 2015/758) requires the Commission to assess the need of requirements for an interoperable, standardised, secure and open-access platform, in order to ensure open choice for customers and fair competition, as well as encourage innovation and boost competitiveness.

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