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Press Release

Political Lunch Debate: “Consumers looking for guidance. Petrol, diesel or electric car – would an ecolabel help purchasing decisions?”

EAC calls for transparency and European agreement on perspectives for the future of internal combustion engines

Brussels, 26 October 2017 – Asked what he would like to see from policy-makers, EAC Vice-President Günther Schweizer had a clear answer: “Given that some Member States are already discussing dates for phasing out internal combustion engines, we need definite statements on the future of automobile propulsion technologies.”

In the panel discussion at the EAC event on 17 October in Brussels it soon became evident that, even in a Europe-wide harmonisation process, an eco-label for cars to supplement existing car labels can only be a partial answer to counter the growing uncertainty among consumers thinking of buying a new car.

If properly designed, such an eco-label may provide better comparability between cars with different propulsion systems and so, in times of driving bans in inner cities and a near Europe-wide tax on the carbon content of fuels, offer a point of reference for potential buyers. Moreover, to provide industry and consumers with planning security for investments, policy-makers need to develop an unequivocal position. “If the Commission and some Member States are already thinking aloud about the end of cars using diesel and petrol as fuels, this harbours the risk of putting a brake on further developing the internal combustion engine,” Schweizer noted. “In addition, such uncertainty encourages consumers to postpone purchasing cars until clarity is achieved over whether or not the internal combustion engine has a future market in the EU. The consequences,” he added, “are already obvious. Car fleets are not being renewed as quickly and becoming older overall, at the expense of road safety and the environment – and this cannot be in our interests.”

But rather than just being a challenge for the political sphere, it is also a challenge for automobile manufacturers. “Of course,” Schweizer emphasised,

“the automobile industry must play its part. But – especially with respect to the emissions scandal – if the sector only admits to mistakes when they are already evident and proven, all other measures will fizzle out without effect. We urgently need more transparency and less salami tactics!”

The European Automobile Clubs (EAC) association represents the interests of around three million road users. As a partner for mobility, our vision is to promote mobility and open up Europe's roads. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to harmonise the road traffic provisions between EU states and encourage innovative technologies – for greater road safety and sustainable mobility solutions.

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