

EU LEGISLATION UPDATE

JANUARY 2008



OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE

FIVA attends Forum for Automobile and Society meeting in Brussels

FIVA attended its first meeting of the Forum of Automobiles and Society as an invited Non-Governmental Organisation. The Forum is a body which was established by some MEPs and automobile sector representatives some years ago as a body to allow structured dialogue between the interests of the automobile industry and EU decision makers. FIA acts as the secretariat. Its political members are politicians and senior policymakers with an interest in automotive and mobility issues and its subscribing members are companies and organisations from the automobile sector. Political members on the steering group direct the Forum's meetings' programme and all political members can propose matters for discussion. Currently 41 MEPs are members. During the recent meeting a range of issues were discussed including motorcycle safety, seatbelt reminders, potential bans of SUV's in cities, speed limits in Germany and traffic pollution in non-EU Countries.

European Commission looks at small and medium sized enterprises

At the end of January, the European Commission's DG Enterprise launched a public consultation on the content of a European "Small Business Act" – with the objective to put small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) at "the forefront of decision-making in the EU" and to optimise their growth potential. The intention is to propose new initiatives including actions to reduce the regulatory burden on SMEs, to help provide necessary financial/human resources for SME development and to help SMEs face the challenge of globalization and climate change – all of which will be included in a the planned Act. FIVA will contribute to the consultation and use the opportunity to highlight not only the depth and strength of the businesses which support the historic vehicle movements across the EU but also to highlight the vast array of skills which are exist and transferred in order to maintain the businesses.

INFORMATION

European Commission takes steps toward efficient and fair pricing of transport services

The European Commission has released a compilation of existing studies on external costs in the transport sector which summarise current thinking on the valuation of external costs of transport (air pollution, noise, climate change, congestion and accidents etc – and which includes examples of unit values per travelled distance according to typical traffic situations) in preparation for the anticipated paper on the internalisation of external costs for all modes of transport and the revision of the directive on the charging of heavy goods vehicles. The resultant booklet shows that external costs depend strongly on parameters like vehicle characteristics (EURO standards), location (urban or interurban) and the period of time (peak, off-peak and night time). An English copy of the booklet can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/costs/handbook/doc/2008_01_15_handbook_external_cost_en.pdf

Commission rejects biofuel criticism and the EU institutions pursue

The European Commission has been forced to defend its policies promoting biofuels following a couple of reports which have questioned biofuels' environmental credentials. One of the reports was produced by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre the other by a UK Parliamentary Committee. The JRC report concluded that the cost of promoting biofuels is likely to outweigh the benefits, with no guarantee of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while the UK report called for a "moratorium on current targets" for biofuels until international sustainability standards can be agreed. The criticism is based on the CO₂ emissions and/or damage to the environment of mass production – often resulting in forest clearance – of crops for biofuels.

Meanwhile, MEPs and EU governments are aiming to reach agreement on draft legislative proposals to reduce lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from road fuels which among other measures calls for the inclusion of biofuel sustainability criteria.

MEPs confirm opposition to EU car CO₂ deadline

In January the European Parliament reiterated its opposition to a proposed 2012 deadline for Europe's car industry to cut average new car emissions to 130 g/km (see December EU issues update), calling instead for a 125g/km target by 2015.

Czech government favours low-emission cars in new tax regime

The Czech government has proposed changes to the taxation of passenger cars to promote the use of cleaner vehicles. If approved by the Parliament, an existing exemption from road taxes for electric cars will be extended to vehicles powered by liquid petroleum gas, compressed natural gas or fuel blends with high biofuel content, additionally, buyers of new cars will get a tax reduction of 48 per cent in the first three years and 40 per cent in the following three. However, owners of cars over 18 years old will pay a 25 per cent premium.

Romania adopts new car tax regime

The Romanian government has reformed its car registration tax scheme that intended to tax imported cars more heavily than those sold within the country – with a scale of charges based on car age being applied to imported cars. The aim was to prevent an influx of older, more polluting cars. However, the European Commission had complained that the measure was discriminatory – and so Romania has now agreed to base the scale structure on actual pollution levels and apply it to all car registrations.

Air pollution in Germany exceeds legal limits

Concentration of nitrogen oxide and particulate matter pollution exceeded legal air quality limits in Germany in 2007 - with nitrogen oxides (NO_x) breaking a 2010 limit value at over half of urban roadside measuring stations. Also, ozone concentrations exceeded a long-term target value at 98 per cent of all the recording stations.

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The FIVA Legislation Commission members are: Winfried Kallinger (Chairman), Tiddo Bresters (Vice Chairman), Lars Genild (Vice Chairman), Patrick Rollet (Member/Secretary), Andrew Burt (Member), David Davies (Member), Carla Fiocchi (Member), Zoltán Gárdos (Member),

Adalberto Gueli (Member), Maik Hirschfeld (Member), Horst Brüning (Member coopted), Peeter Henning (Member coopted), and Andrew Turner of EPPA works with the Committee.