

Sustainable future for transport

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The Council held a debate and adopted conclusions on clean and energy efficient vehicles for a competitive automotive industry and decarbonised road transport.

The main elements of the conclusions may be summarised as follows:

- the Council recalls that the objective of the European Union to raise the share of renewable energies in its gross final energy consumption to 20% and to 10% in transport by 2020. It also recalls that the Competitiveness Council in its Conclusions on the 'Need for a new industrial policy' of 2 March 2010 invited the Commission to come forward with an action plan for clean and energy-efficient vehicles (including the growing role of fully electric cars and plug-in hybrids). In particular, it welcomes the Commission's [Communication](#) entitled "A European strategy on clean and energy efficient vehicles" of 28 April 2010, which builds on the on-going measures and sets out an ambitious medium- to long-term policy through an Action Plan, which will strengthen Europe's leadership in clean automotive technologies;
- the Council emphasises, in the light of scientific and market evidence, that electric vehicles (including full electric and plug-in hybrids) will soon be ready for market introduction by some manufacturers and are meeting increasing consumer acceptance, as the safety, standardisation, electricity consumption, environmental aspects and affordability are optimized. It also notes the need to make further progress on improving the environmental performance and the fuel efficiency of these vehicles, including increased use of second generation bio-fuels and gaseous fuels;
- the Council considers that in order to speed up the market uptake of clean and energy efficient vehicles, a supportive policy framework could contribute to creating business confidence. It emphasises that the European Union should take leadership in supporting the roll-out and consumer acceptance of alternative power-trains and energy efficient vehicles while bearing in mind actions taken by the Member States, regions and municipalities in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

With regard to the action plan presented in the Communication, the Council highlights the need to:

- focus on research excellence in order to ensure that alternative power-trains receive targeted research financing, including innovative energy storage and conversion technologies, such as batteries, fuel cells and the necessary respective infrastructure;
- support breakthrough improvements in internal combustion engines, further step-change improvements to the performance of conventional vehicles and exploring the opportunities offered by mild hybridisation of conventional vehicles, aerodynamics improvement and weight reduction;
- simplify and streamline the administrative rules for obtaining EU research grants;
- promote the successful implementation of the Green Car Initiative via EIB financing and European research grants that helped the industry to maintain their R&D activities during the crisis in order to be well positioned for the economic recovery.

The Commission is called upon to consult Member States and stakeholders and to rapidly come up with guidelines on potential financial incentives for consumers to buy green vehicles in order to stimulate the market uptake of clean and energy-efficient vehicles, without giving preference to any particular technology. The Council calls on local, regional and national authorities and all relevant stakeholders to take all necessary measures so that a skilled and qualified workforce is available for alternative power-train and energy-efficient technologies.

In parallel, the Council urges European standardisation bodies, via the standardisation process, to develop, as a matter of priority by mid-2011, a harmonised solution for the interoperability between electric vehicles and the charging infrastructure and to address safety risks and electromagnetic compatibility. The European standardisation bodies should take into account existing technical solutions and ongoing work at international standardisation bodies, international promotion of EU standards should continue. The Council welcomes the intention of the Commission to launch an EU-wide electromobility demonstration project in 2011, which could integrate national pilot projects across borders.

The Council calls on the Commission to come forward with proposals for the implementation of actions set out in the Communication and therefore:

- stresses the need for the Commission to engage in a thorough consultation process in order to propose legislative acts (accompanied by impact assessments) and guidelines;
- calls for the prompt re-launch of the CARS 21 process, with a revised mandate and extended stakeholder involvement;
- calls on it to draw lessons from national strategies and regional pilot projects launched by European cities and regions and to incorporate, where appropriate, these in its work on guidelines for financial incentives and infrastructures;
- calls on the Commission to report annually on the implementation of the strategy to the Council, notwithstanding the mandatory review to be performed in 2014;
- confirms that the Council is ready to assume responsibility for the timely and efficient implementation of the legislative measures required.