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Connected Cars – Access to Vehicle Data

Safeguarding consumer choice by securing access to vehicle data for all market participants

The present situation and issues at stake

The connected vehicle is not a future vision, but already a reality on our roads. Thanks to their telematic systems, cars already offer car users a wide range of value-added services, from current traffic information to route planning and location-based information on, for example, the nearest restaurant or car park. But this flow of data is not a one-way street. A vehicle does not only receive data, but also transmits it – often without the driver’s knowledge or consent. Due to the system design, this data is transmitted exclusively to each vehicle manufacturer. As a result, manufacturers not only have privileged access to technical monitoring data from systems and performance, but also data potentially able to provide an insight into the driver’s personal preferences. The thereby generated prospects for establishing and developing data-based business areas not only offer significant opportunities, but also promises considerable returns. This turns vehicle data into a valuable commodity and a fiercely competitive resource. Moreover, access to it then plays a crucial role in the future of the automotive aftermarket and service sector.

Identifying challenges, sustaining market diversification

Through their presently privileged position as sole decision-makers on collecting, processing and transferring vehicle data, vehicle manufacturers have already secured a significant competitive edge in many areas over other service providers with either no access to this readable data or only able to access it against non-harmonised fees and not in real time. In addition, with manufacturers’ individual telematic systems having different requirements for access, many third-party suppliers are confronting major technical and financial challenges which – should the present legal situation continue – not all will be able to meet successfully. This situation harbours the risk of cut-throat competition threatening the free choice of car users.

Ensuring consumer choice

To prevent any further distortion of competition and secure the **consumer's freedom of choice** in the long-term, the association of European Automobile Clubs (EAC) is calling for statutory provisions regulating the **standardised access to vehicle data for all market participants**. In accordance with the mandate enshrined in the eCall Regulation 2015/758 to assess the “need of an interoperable, standardised, secure and open-access platform”, **unequivocal conditions for the technical and legal framework** must be established which, in addition, allow for the speed of technical developments.

In brief, the EAC is calling for:

1. Permanently safeguarding the consumer's freedom of choice.
2. Maintaining market diversity by ensuring fair competition, with this reflected in the same framework conditions for all market participants – granting all providers of the range of vehicle services sustainable and secure access to the vehicle data they need.
3. Ensuring that access to the data meets clear technical and legal criteria designed to preserve the diversity of existing business models and, at the same time, promote innovation.

Level playing field for fair competition

In this context various approaches are being discussed which, given differing infrastructures, employ quite different systems to access vehicle data. Here, though, not every model meets the mandate of the eCall Regulation which, with its requirement of open-access, places unequivocal demands on the system architecture of telematic services in passenger vehicles. In the view of the EAC, to meet these requirements and secure fair competition, it is essential for all market participants to have access:

- to the same data
- immediately and directly
- without supervision
- in real time.

As a result, automobile manufacturers in the aftermarket sector would have access to the same data and face the same initial conditions as any independent third-party provider. In this case, access to data and its further processing would be solely dependent on the driver's consent. Car users must be in a position to choose freely between all vehicle service providers and personally decide who will be provided with which data, when and for which purpose. The car user should

neither be hampered from making this choice by technical barriers, nor by limits on the data quality or quantity.

In the long term: Open telematics platform

Against this background, the EAC is committed to an **open-access and interoperable telematic platform** in vehicles. This needs to meet clearly defined standards and the highest safety requirements to exclude unauthorized access to the vehicle systems. Since this requires developments and advances that contrast with the urgent need for legislation, realising an open-access and interoperable telematic platform represents a goal, and one that moreover is to be forcefully pursued over the long-term with the involvement of all market participants.

In the short term: Shared-server-principle

Given the need, pursuant to the existing EU legislation, to grant the right to equal access to technical information and establish a level playing field for competition **in the short-term**, the EAC is supporting the implementation of an interim solution. The aim must be to correct, swiftly and sustainably, the existing imbalance in favour of manufacturers, allowing both consumers and independent third-party suppliers to benefit from the advantages of telematic technologies. To achieve this goal, the EAC endorses the introduction of a data platform in accordance with the **shared server principle**. This independently operated platform should manage personal, geographic and service-related data and make it accessible for all market participants. Here too, though, the car user should be the sole decision-maker on data utilisation and processing, and free to supply such data to the service provider of choice.

Conclusion

To secure the consumer's freedom of choice, a free and fair competition is essential. This can only be achieved if **all** car-related market players may provide their services under the same framework conditions by having equal access to vehicle data. For this reason, the association of European Automobile Clubs (EAC) is calling for the introduction of technical and legal provisions defining unequivocal conditions for all stakeholders. Only by preventing distortions of competition and ensuring a wide range of products and services, the free choice of consumers can be safeguarded in the long term.