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The Mobile Internet: Challenges of eCall in a Connected Vehicle

In retrospect, it has all happened very quickly: the Internet has only been in commercial operation since 1993. Internet access today is not just part of everyday life on stationary computers, but also on mobile devices. The 'Internet of Things', now on the horizon, ushers in a new stage of development which also includes the advent of the Internet age for cars. As a result, a direct readout of vehicle data is technically just as feasible as the automated transmission of vehicle-specific information. The car will be wirelessly connected and part of the 'new' Internet.

This development needs to be taken into account when considering the idea of an automatic emergency call (eCall) system. The binding introduction across Europe of eCall technology for all new vehicles from 2015 could considerably reduce emergency service reaction times. For this reason, the European Automobile Club Association (EAC) expressly welcomes the implementation of the automatic eCall system, since this will significantly increase safety on Europe's roads. In contrast to the days when the first discussions on eCall were held, this is no longer a separate system. Instead, in technical terms, it is now just one application of a connected car. On the basis of vehicle telematics, value added services will increasingly be available which require clear statutory regulations to ensure consumer protection and free and fair competition.

Consequently, integrating the eCall system in the connected car requires an additional discussion on vehicle data and how such data is utilized. An eCall function can save lives and should be implemented as soon as possible. Here, though, one should not forget that the automatic eCall's success ought to be measured, in the first place, by the organisation of speedy assistance and establishing and expanding functioning emergency services across Europe rather than by its technical realisation in the car –which, in the meantime, is a simple matter.

In the form of the eCall, the emergency call, which has proven its value as a state sovereign task, not only has to be fixed as legally binding, but its implementation also needs to be guaranteed by the state. For this reason:

- 1. An emergency call must remain an emergency call. Whether police, rescue or fire services: one of the primary tasks of the state is to assist its citizens, and this applies equally to providing and processing the eCall system in vehicles. The responsibility for eCall cannot be delegated to a private service provider!**

Furthermore, in the interest of traffic security, for example, regulating traffic flows, it may be desirable to pass on data going beyond the simple eCall system.

2. Data is not just data. Aside from data transfer in the emergency call system, vehicle data can be employed for the good of the public and road users. Data records created in the public interest and on the basis of statutory requirements must be freely accessible and utilisable.

This requires statutorily regulated and defined standards for transmitting and processing these basic data records which, aside from specifying locations, may also contain anonymous vehicle data. These standards must also ensure equal access to this information for all providers of emergency services and other vehicle services.

In principle, the basic rule must be: all data generated from a car is the 'property' of the user:

3. The user decides. Vehicle data rights must remain solely with the user, who can then decide on transmission, further utilization and processing.

For the car, similarly to the classic end device, e.g., computer or smartphone, users should be in a position to decide for themselves who has access to their data. In the case of an accident or vehicle break-down, this implies the driver's free choice to contact a preferred service provider via a 'bCall' (breakdown call) and supply that provider with the relevant data, and also implies that the manufacturer cannot restrict that data transfer.

In addition, as with other end devices, users should have free access to the 'car hardware' without restrictions on installing own apps providing these do not conflict with vehicle security functions. Thus, manufacturers should not be allowed to install pre-defined work settings or excessive pricing models, etc., limiting the free market access of external app providers, and thus restricting the user's flow of information.

Conclusion

Implementing the technology for this consumer-focused connected car system requires an open and standardised interface ensuring external service providers can also have access to vehicle data released by the user. To realise such an anti-discriminatory vehicle system combining the eCall required for safety reasons and freely selected value-added services, the European Automobile Club Association (EAC) is calling for requisite statutory provisions which, within the framework of the binding introduction of the eCall system across Europe in 2015, also ensure standardised access to telematics services going beyond that system as well as free and fair competition between market participants.