

PRESS RELEASE

Fair regulation will enable greener and smarter solutions for the aftermarket and a stronger mobility ecosystem in Europe

- **Market outlook:** Industry leaders emphasise the need for a clearer legislative framework to unlock innovation and competitiveness in the aftermarket.
- **Advocacy for fair regulation:** CLEPA calls for a sector-specific legislation, and supports the intention of the Commission to regulate secure access to OBD only if covering all vehicle interfaces.
- **Innovation takes centre stage:** 10 start-ups pitch cutting-edge aftermarket solutions, offering promising advancements in sustainability, talent acquisition, customer experience, and more.

Brussels, 26 March 2024 – The automotive aftermarket in Europe faces a transformative landscape shaped by sustainability policies, technological advancements, and evolving regulatory frameworks. Ahead of the upcoming European elections, the 15th edition of the CLEPA Aftermarket Conference welcomed a distinguished line-up of policymakers, specialists and trendsetters providing insights and strategic guidance for a more competitive mobility ecosystem.

The event, held on 20 & 21 March in Brussels under the theme “Digital and Sustainable Solutions for a Competitive Aftermarket,” brought together over 250 participants, including top-level speakers from the European Commission and industry.

In his welcome speech, CLEPA Secretary General, **Benjamin Krieger**, stated: “Achieving sustainability strategies will only be possible with public support for the derisking of investments in new technologies and rules which are coherent and consistently in line with policy objectives. Looking towards the European elections, we have seen five years of unprecedented political and regulatory activity - now is the time to focus on

implementation of these policies.”

CLEPA President, **Matthias Zink**, reaffirmed his commitment to shaping policies that foster climate action while supporting a competitive EU industry: “The overall regulatory framework in Europe must remain ambitious yet flexible to empower continuous innovation and allow all solutions to play their part. This will help us reach our goals faster and more efficiently while also catering to consumer choice.”

A line-up of **10 innovative start-ups** showcased cutting-edge technologies in electrification, sustainability, big data and AI, offering a glimpse into future services in the aftermarket. Canadian **BL Innovare** won ‘best pitch’ for presenting their touchless drive-thru inspection system, capable of capturing thousands of measurements per second, offering a comprehensive vehicle check from documentation of the outer vehicle shape to the measurement of the wheel alignment angles.

On Day 2 of the conference, the first session centred on the legislative environment and market outlook for the European aftermarket, setting the stage for discussions on industry trends and regulatory developments.

Debbie Capell of S&P Global outlined major trends impacting the European aftermarket, including electrification and the surge of Chinese battery electric vehicles. **Louise Wohrne**, Chair of the Forum on Automotive Aftermarket Sustainability (FAAS), highlighted the association’s commitment to advancing sustainability along the aftermarket value chain. **Mariam Lochoshvili** from Next Automotive Aftermarket Generation (NAAG) focused on how talent acquisition and retention can be improved in the automotive industry. **Sebastian Kempf** of McKinsey presented a use case demonstrating how generative AI is unlocking new opportunities in mobility and the aftermarket, leveraging the complexity of the aftermarket business to drive AI-based solutions.

In the second session, **Marcus Sacré** and **Thomas Funke** from Osborne Clarke delivered a keynote on the relevance of the Repair and Maintenance Information (RMI)-legislation and the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption regulation (MVBEX), highlighting enforcement challenges. This presentation was followed by a panel discussion focusing on how to maintain a level-playing field for vehicle repairers. The panel featured **Mark Nicklas**, Head of Unit Mobility at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Internal Market, **Laurianne Krid** from FIA Region I, **Jeremy Smith** from Belron and **Jan-Willem van der Linden** from CECRA. Discussions revolved around the legal framework’s role in maintaining competitiveness among aftermarket players. While

sector-specific legislation on access to data remains in discussion in the Commission, the panel emphasised the immediate priority of regulating secure access to the On-board Diagnostics (OBD) and ensuring secure spare parts installation. CLEPA calls for a sector-specific legislation, and supports the intention of the Commission to regulate secure access to OBD only if covering all vehicle interfaces. Consensus was reached on the necessity of a clear legal framework to uphold competition and consumer choice, with the RMI-legislation and MVBBER emerging as essential pillars with heightened relevance in the future.

The final session focused on the impact of AI technology and electrification on the aftermarket. **Stefan van Dalen** (Hella), **Adnan Cemal** (Hella Gutmann) and **Bastian Mertens** (AHEAD Automotive) introduced AI-powered aftermarket service solutions designed to aid technicians in navigating the complexities of various technologies. **Alma Oprasic** (Exfluency) showcased a translation tool using AI for multilingual technical documentation and repair manuals. **Richard Stooß** (Authentic Vision) and **Alfred Wimmer** (Dana) showed their approach to smart customer engagement through secure product authentication. **Bas Wintjes** (WESP) explained how data can be used to make repair shops even more efficient and profitable and **Marlies Doornenbal** (Auto Totaal Houten) and **Michael Dittmar** (Dittmar & Stachowiak) concluded the session by emphasising the importance of investing in the capability to offer service and maintenance for battery electric vehicles.

Frank Schlehuber, CLEPA Senior Consultant for Market Affairs, closed the 15th edition of the conference with an optimistic note, stating: "We are on the right track towards sustainability, and technologies like AI are pivotal in simplifying processes for a green and digital transformation. The Commission's focus on formulating a new regulation for secure access to OBD signals progress, yet the challenge remains in extending this general solution to all available vehicle interfaces. I invite all to advocate for secure and fair access to vehicle interfaces, essential to sustaining a green and competitive, as well as an affordable and consumer-friendly, mobility ecosystem in Europe."