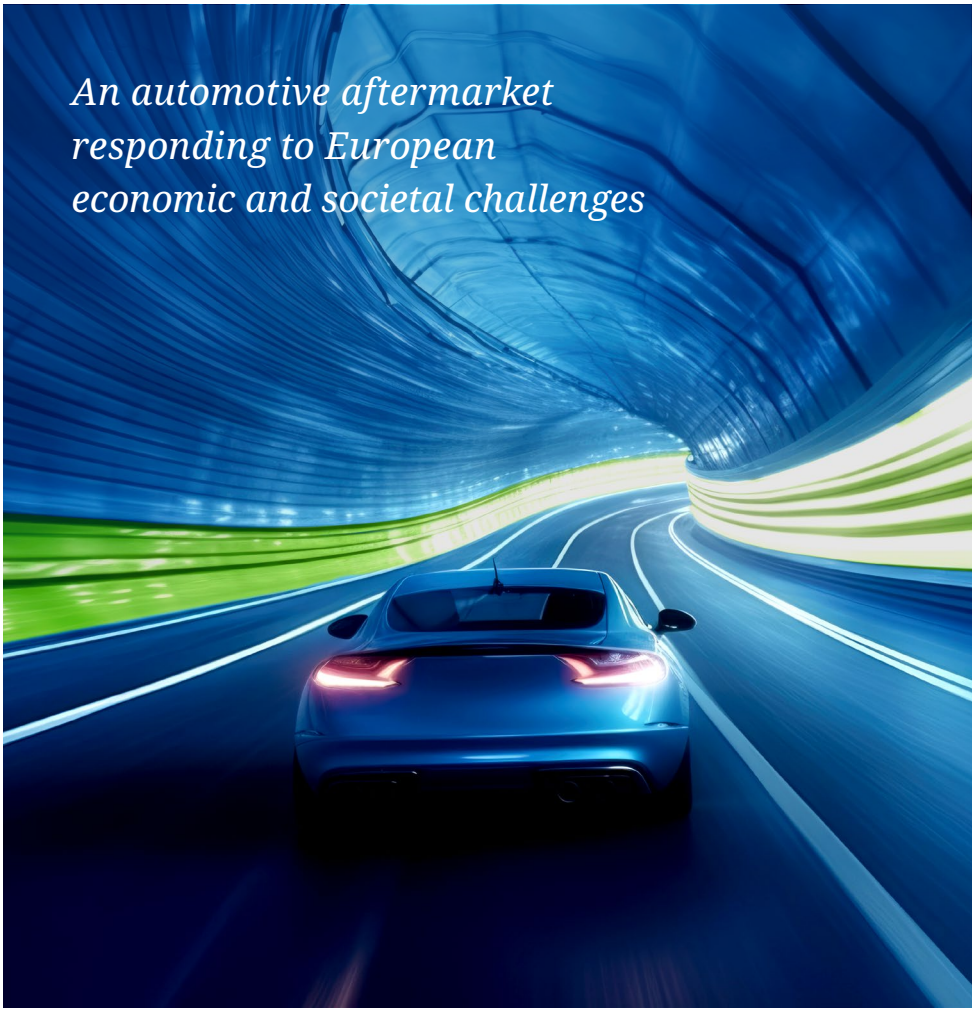
FIGIEFA's Manifesto for the EU 2024-2029 political term



October 2024

FIGIEFA
Automotive Aftermarket Distributors

Equipping the independent automotive aftermarket to service European citizens and companies

European economic and societal challenges

- Fostering competitiveness, innovation capacities and digital transformation
- Maintaining social welfare and purchasing power
- Transition to climate-neutrality and sustainable growth

There are more than 280 million motor vehicles on the roads of the European Union (EU), which need to be serviced, examined, maintained and repaired throughout their lives. The automotive aftermarket provides the means to keep vehicles on the road while maintaining the highest safety, environmental and performance standards, and constantly improving drivers' experience. Independent aftermarket operators provide mobility products and services for the users of all vehicle brands alike.

Who are we?

FIGIEFA represents the independent automotive aftermarket distributors and wholesalers with more than 30.000 companies (mostly SMEs). FIGIEFA provides an efficient delivery of replacement parts, tools, training and other services to more than 280.000 workshops in Europe, offering products and services outside the original vehicle manufacturers' sector.

Our licence to operate

The automotive industry is going through massive technological and economic changes. As vehicles are becoming more complex and connected, it is crucial to preserve fair competition between vehicle manufacturers and independent operators, so that consumers can access affordable, innovative and efficient products and services.

1. Strong and effectively implemented automotive market rules

1.1 Maintain robust legislation to ensure fair competition

Situation

Structural imbalances in market power exist between vehicle manufacturers and independent operators. Acting as technological gatekeepers, vehicle manufacturers can control and restrain access to critical data or information required by independent operators, e.g. for repair purposes.

Solution

Do not deregulate the automotive sector: maintain a strong legal framework fostering fair competition and a level-playing field between vehicle manufacturers and independent operators, who should have all the means and rights to compete on the basis of their value proposition.

1.2 Better enforcement of the automotive market rules

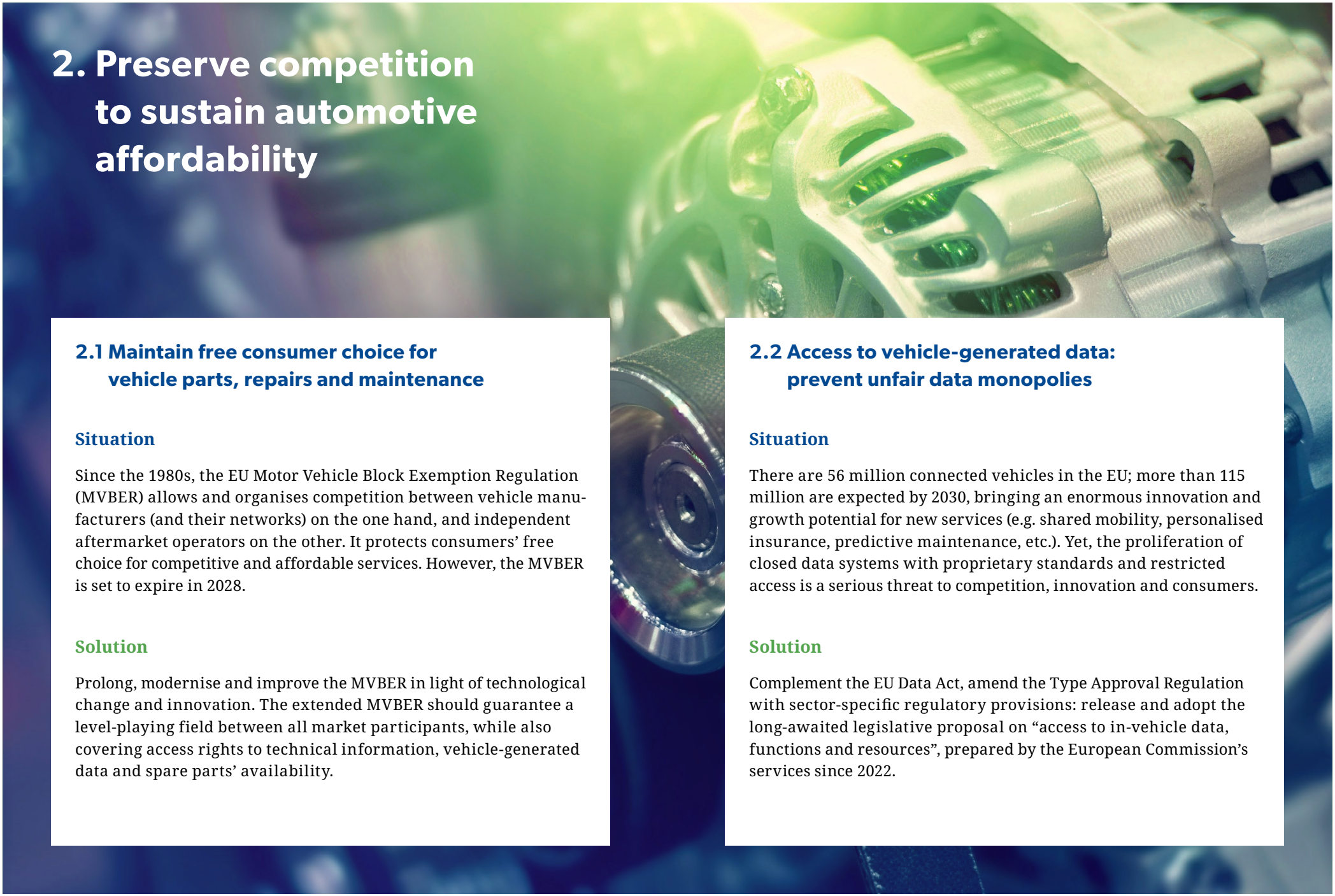
Situation

Independent automotive aftermarket operators, being predominantly SMEs, do not have the means to litigate each and every time their rights are violated. Only a few manage to file complaints at their National Competition Authority (NCA) or EU level, which might be put aside or lead to long and costly procedures.

Solution

Improve effective enforcement of sector-specific rules for the automotive aftermarket to strengthen the Single Market. For competition rules, organise a permanent dialogue among NCAs and with the European Commission. Improve transparency, predictability and guidance regarding competition distortion cases.

2. Preserve competition to sustain automotive affordability



2.1 Maintain free consumer choice for vehicle parts, repairs and maintenance

Situation

Since the 1980s, the EU Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation (MVBER) allows and organises competition between vehicle manufacturers (and their networks) on the one hand, and independent aftermarket operators on the other. It protects consumers' free choice for competitive and affordable services. However, the MVBER is set to expire in 2028.

Solution

Prolong, modernise and improve the MVBER in light of technological change and innovation. The extended MVBER should guarantee a level-playing field between all market participants, while also covering access rights to technical information, vehicle-generated data and spare parts' availability.

2.2 Access to vehicle-generated data: prevent unfair data monopolies

Situation

There are 56 million connected vehicles in the EU; more than 115 million are expected by 2030, bringing an enormous innovation and growth potential for new services (e.g. shared mobility, personalised insurance, predictive maintenance, etc.). Yet, the proliferation of closed data systems with proprietary standards and restricted access is a serious threat to competition, innovation and consumers.

Solution

Complement the EU Data Act, amend the Type Approval Regulation with sector-specific regulatory provisions: release and adopt the long-awaited legislative proposal on "access to in-vehicle data, functions and resources", prepared by the European Commission's services since 2022.

3. Future-proof EU policies to reflect technological change and innovation

3.1 Automotive legislation should accompany automotive innovation

Situation

Technological change in the automotive sector creates new dependencies for independent operators towards vehicle manufacturers. Vehicles (especially electric ones) are more software-based, with advanced monitoring and remote-control capacities. Market rules must keep up with the fast pace of innovation.

Solution

Review and update the Vehicle Type Approval Regulation and its dedicated Chapter on Access to Technical Information to reflect recent technological changes and their impact on the automotive aftermarket. Bring new repair and maintenance requirements on Advanced Driver-Assistance System (ADAS) and for electric vehicles and their batteries, ensure continuous On-board Diagnostics (OBD) access for independent operators, facilitate Ethernet software updates, regulate dependency to vehicle manufacturers' off-board platforms.

3.2 A safe and inclusive automotive cybersecurity regime for the entire supply chain

Situation

As vehicles are more connected, they must be more cybersecure. International cybersecurity requirements are defined in UNECE Regulation R155, but its implementation is left to the discretion of vehicle manufacturers, who can create unjustified market barriers against independent operators.

Solution

Add new cybersecurity provisions within the Type Approval Regulation: more EU-level detailed rules on the implementation of UNECE R155 are needed for the aftermarket, as well as more transparency and the availability of interoperability information to allow safe and legitimate third-party access to vehicles.

4. Improve vehicle sustainability and circularity

4.1 Vehicles should be environmentally sustainable throughout their lifecycle

Situation

As the EU is transitioning to a climate-neutral economy, the automotive sector must lead the race to decarbonisation by all possible means. The aftermarket already plays an important role through vehicle repairs and maintenance, which improves sustainability and circularity. But more is needed to ensure that all actors in the value-chain cooperate in synchronicity against climate change.

Solution

Do not exclude technologies with a proven decarbonisation potential: apply the technology-neutrality principle in the CO2 Emission Performance Standards Regulation. Pursue the on-going revision of the End-of-Life Vehicles (ELV) legislation; allow independent operators to get access to the necessary information for circularity applications (part removal, reusing, remanufacturing, etc.)

4.2 A new “repairability by design” requirement for vehicles and their components

Situation

New vehicle production techniques can impede their repairability. For example, giga-casting consists in building large single-block vehicle parts, thus hindering the replacement of individual components. Electric vehicles are increasingly difficult to repair, as battery cells are sometimes sealed or glued.

Solution

The EU should improve a new “repairability by design” requirement for all vehicles and their components, including electric vehicles and traction batteries, within sector-specific rules for the automotive aftermarket (e.g ELV or Type-Approval legislations). The European Commission should investigate the environmental, social and economical impacts of new vehicle production techniques such as giga-casting.

5. Professional skills: digitalisation and circular economy

5.1 A highly skilled European automotive workforce

Situation

Technological change, decarbonisation and digitalisation of the automotive sector are leading to shortages in skilled workers. More professionals with specialised technical and digital knowledge are needed to keep vehicles safe, performant, sustainable and compliant.

Solution

The European Commission should identify strategic sectors in need of highly specialised technical skills aligned with the EU policy objectives, such as digitalisation and the transition towards climate-neutral road transport. Member States should develop the necessary educational programmes in those strategic sectors.

5.2 Lifelong learning, a condition for successful European innovation

Situation

Innovation is beneficial to society when it creates accessible professional opportunities for all. In the automotive aftermarket, SMEs are the main employers in Europe. Keeping up with the rapid pace of technological innovation requires constant learning and more accessible professional reconversion.

Solution

The EU research and education programmes, as well as the EU cohesion and structural funds, should further support the development of lifelong professional learning and reconversion in sectors with high technological innovation, such as the automotive sector and its aftermarket.

Notes

Find our full manifesto here

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