



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Liberalisation of automotive parts and repair market is an opportunity for European SMEs, not a threat

Brussels, 08th September 2004. “Contrary to what large car manufacturers and other stakeholders want to make us believe, allowing independent enterprises to provide services that are still restricted to authorised auto dealers in some countries will not weaken the European automotive part and repair market but will instead strengthen it” **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME’s Secretary General, declared today.

Therefore, UEAPME, the European SME employers association and its member association, AIRC, the International Association of vehicles repairers, strongly urge the European Commission to adopt the 'Repairs Clause' to the European Commission's Design Directive (98/71) to exempt spare parts from design protection.

According to UEAPME, which represents over 11 million small and medium sized enterprises across the EU, the liberalisation of the car-parts market would lead to a spur in activity for European SMEs active in the sector, promote innovation amongst car repairers and offer a greater choice for consumers.

Rejecting the clause however, would considerably weaken the independent automobile repairers position and is likely to lead to massive bankruptcies and unemployment.

AIRC and UEAPME also point out that the argument of delocalisation used by large vehicle manufacturers is misleading. Indeed, a number of surveys indicate that multinational car companies have long ago adopted the policy of delocalising the production of car parts outside the EU because of lower labour costs. Currently, only 20% of car parts are produced by European vehicle manufactures. Independent automobile repairers have on the other hand committed to the European market and have invested heavily in vocational training to guarantee the quality of service.

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UEAPME and AIRC are part of ECAR, an alliance of 11 independent EU organisations representing vehicle parts, producers, distributors, independent repairers, the European motor insurance industry, a large cross section of small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the 235 million motorists in the European Union.

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