

Dr. Andreas Schwab (EPP-ED), Rapporteur for the IMCO Committee on the Regulation on Type-approval requirements for the general safety of motor vehicles.

The automotive industry is one of the key European industries and a driving force of innovation. The industry comprises about 6,5 % of the Union's manufacturing sector. Direct employment by the automotive industry accounts for about 2,2 million jobs in the EU, while the total employment effect, direct and indirect, is estimated to stand at around 12 million.

As the need for travelling will invariably increase over the coming years, passenger cars and trucks will continue to account for a significant proportion of transport, and will likely remain in pole position. Moreover, since the EU is the world's largest region for automotive production, it must be equipped with a holistic strategy and a long-term policy approach that provides the sector with a reliable plan,, economic and employment stability, and continued global competitiveness

Furthermore, as rapid changes in technology are inherent to the automotive sector, European legislation should additionally be technology-neutral and supportive of innovation.

The European Parliament and the Council recently adopted legislation that introduces a simpler, standardised system for the type-approval of motor vehicles. With close links to the CO₂-package, this Regulation also introduces new technologies that will contribute to reduce CO₂ emissions as standard on new vehicles. Today, about 50% of cars drive with under-inflated tyres. In particular, it is estimated that the Regulation's compulsory introduction of accurate Tyre Pressure Monitoring Systems on Passenger Cars will reduce annual CO₂ emissions by between 2.7Million tons (Mt) to 5.4 Mt. Additionally, the Regulation's introduction of lower rolling resistance limits for all categories of tyres will, on a yearly basis, reduce CO₂ emissions by between 3.1Mt and 3.4 Mt.

Reduced costs for the driver

These new technologies also contribute to significant fuel consumption gains. A tyre that is only 20% under-inflated generates 2% more fuel consumption per kilometre. Also, the improved rolling resistance limits of the Regulation will contribute to fuel savings of about 1,5%.

Improving safety

The safety of road vehicles in Europe is steadily improving. The number of people killed on Europe's roads fell by 24% since 2001 thanks to better car design and manufacture. However, further safety improvements can still be achieved by introducing technologies which are already available on the market and exemplify European manufacturing excellence. The Regulation will make such safety features compulsory on all cars, in particular electronic stability control (ESC), which helps the driver keep control of the vehicle. ESC will be made compulsory on all vehicles. Advanced emergency braking (AEBS) and lane departure warning systems (LDWS) are also to be made compulsory for heavy goods vehicles.

Finally, safety can be improved through better tyre-design. Accordingly the wet grip requirements in the Regulation have been thoroughly tightened.

Quiet cars

Various factors contribute to road noise: noise generated by the car's engine, by the tyres and by the road. The Regulation sets more stringent noise emission limit values for tyres than those set out in existing legislation. In any case, it is clear that, in the medium term, necessary additional investments must be undertaken by Member States, especially for improved quieter road-surfaces and a coherent approach to reduce the combined noise output for all means of transport is required.

Gradual entry into force

The new Regulation shall apply from 1 November 2011, a year earlier than the Commission proposed. But various transition periods are provided for, in some cases until 2018, to enable the car industry to adapt to the new requirements. Thus, the new requirements for tyres will only enter into force in 2013 (excluding rolling resistance values) and 2016 (including rolling resistance values).

Raising industry competitiveness

The new Regulation reflects car safety standards harmonised by the United Nations and contributes to the competitiveness of the automotive industry by simplifying the existing vehicle safety type-approval legislation (by replacing 50 Directives), improving transparency and easing administrative burdens. Small and medium sized enterprises in the automotive supply sector in Europe will especially benefit from the new requirements, because they are the actors who provide the vehicle manufacturers with innovative systems and components.

Overall we have succeeded in improving road safety in Europe by going further than the Commission proposed. We achieved the early introduction of Electronic Stability Control Systems for all vehicles, and in general, new technologies shall be pushed ahead faster, whilst invigorating the competitiveness of European manufacturers.