

shecco input to EC public hearing on a European strategy on clean and energy efficient vehicles

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In 1886, the first electric taxi was launched in England and in 1897 Mr Ferdinand Porsche produced his first car – which was also electric. By 1904, electric vehicles were being overshadowed by cheaper, faster and more convenient petrol vehicles. Although this may have spelled the end of electric vehicles, recent breakthroughs in emerging technology and proactive government initiatives have dramatically shifted the viability of these machines.

Recent scientific evidence on climate change has caused societies to urgently consider alternative ways to reduce our carbon emissions. The European Environment Agency estimates that automobiles alone account for 14% of the EU's total CO2 emissions. The role of electric vehicles in the European transport sector has offered a vast opportunity for industry growth, technology development and most importantly, the much needed reduction of transport CO2 emissions.

To date, what are the barriers that still stand in the way of creating a highly competitive EV?

VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Despite the increasing capabilities of EVs, the lack of a unified recharging infrastructure impedes their acceptance into the mass market, creating the “chicken and egg” situation. What should come first?

Implementing European initiatives about charging infrastructures effectively, alongside with the latest in recharging technology advancements, will make the transition to low-carbon vehicles a reality.

With regards to charging facilities in particular, our analysis of the market is that they have to be provided closer to where people live; Only in a second step will fast charging stations on road networks be necessary.

POWERTRAIN INNOVATION HYBRID AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Innovation in technology and powertrain development will play a vital role in optimizing vehicle energy efficiency and reducing costs, resulting in hybrid and electric vehicles that are viable solutions for the future of personal mobility.

The EU can play an active role in the promotion of clean and energy efficient vehicles by providing funding to companies that can make valuable contributions at a moment when EV can “make or break”.

BATTERY TECHNOLOGY

Advanced battery technology is the fastest growing technical field being addressed in electric vehicle development today. It has become the foundation of electric vehicles that has an influence on vehicle cost, range, performance and design characteristics.

Although EVs are available today, the battery continues to be a crippling factor for getting these vehicles on the road with consumers. The future of electric vehicles relies on sophisticated battery technology that can defy cost, range limitations, and durability. Breakthroughs in cell chemistry and battery management systems have shifted the range barrier, while predictions show future battery technologies capable of 400 km, faster charging and energy densities reaching as high as 400 Kwh.

CO2 EMISSIONS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ENHANCING EV UPTAKE?

The European CO2 standardisation process remains pivotal in the dialogue between the European Union and the automotive industry in Europe. As a leader in the fight against climate change with ambitious CO2 targets, the EU needs to define better policy objectives and different methods of facilitating European cycle of efficiency. We need an extra focus tightening CO2 emissions from those available today. Further, setting targets for sales of EVs without limiting CO2

emissions from internal combustion engine cars at all possible levels is in our view an unsatisfactory solution.

SILENT CARS ARE THEY REALLY A PROBLEM?

The United Nations in Geneva adopted yesterday the first international regulation on safety of both fully electric and hybrid cars. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) ensures that cars with a high voltage electric power train, such as hybrid and fully electric vehicles, are as safe as conventional cars. The Regulation also defines requirements on the practical use of electric cars, such as giving an indication to the driver that the electric engine is switched on, which otherwise cannot be heard and could therefore cause unwanted starting of the vehicle and accidents.

IC cars also tend to become less noisy, thanks to improvements in the efficiency of the car's motor. New labeling rules for tires also result in less noisy cars. Even if the future of transport is not full electric, it is definitely less noisy whatever the technology!

COORDINATED APPROACH-STOPPING THE INDUSTRY SPLIT

The continued need for action and collaboration from industry stakeholders and governments remain prevalent as the importance of creating a sustainable consumer market for electric vehicles has become one of the most critical goals for the future of low carbon transport.

CLEAN ENERGY MIX

In order to make the most of the EV technology, a clean energy mix is indispensable to support this shift.

CHANGING CONSUMER ATTITUDE

A fundamental shift in consumer attitudes, along with education, pricing incentives, congestion charges exemptions, balanced taxation and a range of market instruments, will support the adoption of EVs into the marketplace. Could a European strategy address financial mechanisms able to push for a greater market uptake of EVs?

For more information, please contact:
Ms Christianna Papazahariou
Head of government affairs
christianna.papazahariou@shecco.com