

Brussels, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2009

## **Antitrust: Commissioner Kroes hosts roundtable to discuss future of the Car Block Exemption Regulation**

*European Commissioner for Competition Neelie Kroes held a roundtable discussion on 9<sup>th</sup> February at the European Commission's Brussels headquarters to discuss the future of the block exemption Regulation that applies to motor vehicle sales and servicing. Participants included leading figures from all the main stakeholder groups, including consumers, car manufacturers, dealers, roadside assistance operators and independent repairers. The current Regulation is due to expire in 2010 and Commissioner Kroes organised this roundtable to have an informal discussion about the issues and how any change or maintenance of the current Regulation would affect the different categories of operators in the car sector.*

Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes reacted positively to the discussion, saying "It is clear that there are divergent views as to whether general or specific rules should apply to the sector, and as to what the content of those rules should be. I believe that today's meeting exposed the key issues, both as regards the need to respond to the immediate crisis, and the need to lay down a clear and solid framework for the medium-term. We will now design our future policy to take account of the contributions from stakeholders, with a view to releasing a Commission Communication on the subject.

Those attending the roundtable were:

Mr François Augnet	Vice President, Aftermarket Europe & Asia Pacific, TRW
Mr Patrick Blain	Executive Vice President Sales and Marketing, Renault
Mr Simon Bullman	Head of the Eponymous dealer group
Mr Gérard Damski	Chief Executive of Belron Europe & Australasia
Ms Sophie Desormière	Group Product Marketing Director, Valeo
Mr Trevor Finn	CEO Pendragon Plc
Mr Robert Hanser	President Automotive Aftermarket, Bosch
Mr David Kirke	Executive Director European Sales Operations, GM
Mr Werner Kraus	Vice President of the FIA
Mr Maurice Smit	Proprietor of Garage W.W. Smit BV
Mr Franz van Heck	Chairperson of the Board of Van Heck Group
Mr Olivier Veyrier	Director General PGA
Dr Annette Winkler	Vice President Europe, Daimler
Mr Paolo Martinello	President of BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation.

Block exemptions create safe harbours for categories of agreements, relieving the contracting parties from the need to individually analyse those agreements to see whether they fall foul of EU rules on restrictive business practices (Article 81). The motor vehicle block exemption Regulation puts in place such a safe harbour for car and commercial vehicle distribution and servicing agreements, and follows the Commission's modern effects-based approach, according to which policy is driven by a careful analysis of how competition actually works on a given market.

Commissioner Kroes' closing remarks to the roundtable are available in [SPEECH/09/45](#).

The issues paper that formed the basis for the discussion, together with a record of the proceedings, will be available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/competition/sectors/motor\\_vehicles/legislation/legislation.html](http://ec.europa.eu/competition/sectors/motor_vehicles/legislation/legislation.html)

