

Europe needs growth: Let's make the data economy work – Editorial November 2024

Data is an indispensable resource driving innovation, economic growth, and global competitiveness. In the automotive sector, data opens the door to new services, safer mobility, and smarter infrastructure. Yet, without fair regulation to ensure competition, the immense value of this resource risks being concentrated in the hands of a few, stifling innovation and limiting consumer choice. The time has come for Europe to act decisively, implementing clear rules to unlock the full potential of in-vehicle generated data for the benefit of all.

A data economy to secure Europe's future

The European Union has committed to building a robust data economy as a cornerstone of its global competitiveness and digital sovereignty.

In the automotive sector, data is already enabling transformative technologies, from real-time traffic management systems to predictive maintenance tools. For example, the EU's C-Roads initiative is using real-time data to improve road safety and traffic efficiency, showcasing the potential of cooperative intelligent transport systems. Start-ups are leveraging vehicle data to develop fleet management platforms and mobility apps, contributing to a diversified ecosystem of services. The deployment of battery-electric vehicles (BEVs) in the EU needs a consumer-friendly charging infrastructure. Such charging services will depend on in-vehicle data.

Most recently, Mario Draghi, in his [report](#) 'The future of European competitiveness', recommended incentivising data-sharing to drive innovation and proposed joint European projects on affordable EVs, software defined vehicles and AI powered technologies including autonomous driving.

Limitation to competition hampers innovation

However, the current landscape favours only those with exclusive access to data – primarily vehicle manufacturers and large tech companies. This imbalance creates barriers for, or even excludes, others, from large technology suppliers to smaller players such as independent repairers, technology start-ups, and third-party service providers. One of many studies, the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) highlights this point in its [paper on Access to Digital Car Data and Competition in Aftersales Services](#).

Without regulatory support, this imbalance leads to higher costs for consumers, reduced innovation, and a less competitive marketplace. Our [recent study with Berylls by Alix Partners](#) shows that consumers in only seven EU-countries would have to pay an additional €35 billion per year in repair and maintenance costs due to lack of competition in the marketplace.

Regulation as a catalyst for competition

Done rightly, a sector-specific regulation on in-vehicle data would introduce clear, enforceable rules governing fair access to data needed to develop new products and services, fuelling economic growth and consumer choice.

The Data Act positions data as a strong lever for competitiveness and economic success and enables the consumer to decide on sharing their personal data. However, it does not consider sector specific

aspects regarding technology or the competitive environment in the context of connected vehicles which are driving investment decisions.

Hence, [automotive suppliers together with nine other associations from the mobility ecosystem](#) call for appropriate rules to ensure fair access to data from connected vehicles and to maintain adequate access to the Repair and Maintenance Data via the on-board diagnostics interface.

Europe's opportunity to lead

The global race to dominate the automotive transformation is well underway, and data will determine the winners. Europe has an opportunity to lead by ensuring that its market economy remains competitive, innovative, and consumer focused. A clear framework for in-vehicle data access would unlock the full value of this resource, enabling businesses across the supply chain to contribute to Europe's automotive excellence.

A proposal for a sector-specific regulation (SSL) on in-vehicle data is written and ready for adoption by the European Commission. We hope that President Ursula von der Leyen will prioritise its adoption as part of the first 100 days' agenda. By acting now, Europe can align its policies with the reality of a data-driven economy, creating a fair, competitive, and innovative marketplace that benefits businesses and consumers alike.

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About CLEPA

CLEPA, the European Association of Automotive Suppliers based in Brussels, represents over 3,000 companies, from multi-nationals to SMEs, supplying state-of-the-art components and innovative technology for safe, smart and sustainable mobility, investing over €30 billion yearly in research and development. Automotive suppliers in Europe directly employ 1.7 million people in the EU.

Interested in more information? You can contact us at communications@clepa.be