

Passenger car registrations: +14.3% in February

Figures released by the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) show that the EU passenger car market posted a highly accelerated increase, marking the 30th consecutive month of growth. Registrations during the month grew (+14.3%) compared to February 2015, totalling 1,056,902 units. Among the major markets, Italy (+27.3%), France (+13.0%), Spain (+12.6%) and Germany (+12.0%) recorded strong performances in February, all posting double-digit percentage growth. From January to February 2016, new passenger car registrations increased by 10.1%, totalling 2,118,273 million units. All major markets posted growth, contributing to the overall upturn of the EU market. Italy (+22.6%) and Spain (+12.4%) recorded the strongest performances over the period, both posting double-digit percentage gains. Also the French (+8.7%), German (+7.8%) and UK (+4.7%) passenger car markets grew during the first two months of 2016, although at more modest rates. (Source: [ACEA](#))

Semi-automated trucks trial on EU roads

Six European truck manufacturers will bring platoons of semi-automated trucks to public roads, crossing borders from various European cities in order to reach their final destination of the Port of Rotterdam on 6 April. The overall objective of this European Truck Platooning Challenge is to accelerate the introduction of truck platoons by putting the subject high on the agenda of EU policy makers. The Platooning Challenge – organised by the Netherlands as part of its ongoing EU Presidency – fosters European cooperation between truck manufacturers, member states, logistics service providers, road operators, road and vehicle approval authorities, research institutes and governments. Such cooperation on platooning is vital to prevent countries from creating a patchwork of rules and regulations, which could hinder investments in automated and connected vehicles.

Looking ahead, it is important that relevant legislation is harmonised throughout Europe and that countries recognise each other's procedures and requirements. Truck platooning can help make road transport safer, cleaner and more efficient in the future. Platooning results in a lower fuel consumption, as the trucks drive closer together at a constant speed, with less braking and accelerating. Truck platooning therefore has the potential to reduce CO2 emissions by up to 10%. Likewise, connected driving can help improve safety, as braking is automatic with virtually zero reaction time compared to human braking. Finally, platooning also optimises transport by using roads more effectively, helping deliver goods faster and reducing traffic jams. (Source: [ACEA](#))

British business backs EU: CBI survey

The CBI's Chairmen's Committee has taken the final step in endorsing the leading business group's mandate to make the economic case for the UK to remain in the EU. It comes after the CBI reaffirmed its member mandate following a rigorous governance process through the organisation's "business parliament" and publication of a new member survey. A clear majority of CBI member companies – which together employ nearly 7 million people, about one third of private sector employees – believe that it would be in the best interests of their business and the wider UK economy to remain inside the EU. This is according to an independent survey carried out by polling company ComRes. The survey had 773 responses among small, medium and large firms across the whole of the UK. It reveals 80% of CBI members, when weighted to reflect its membership – including 71% of small and mid-sized business members – believe that the UK remaining a member of the EU would be best for their business. Overall, 5% say it is in their firms' best interests for the UK to leave the EU, with 15% unsure. (Source: [CBI](#))

EU/Japan Cooperation Agreement

European Commissioner for Competition Margrethe Vestager and Japan Fair Trade Commission Chairman Kazuyuki Sugimoto have agreed to prepare the upgrading of the existing EU/Japan [Cooperation Agreement on Anticompetitive Activities](#) so as to allow for the exchange of evidence during investigations. The agreement was reached during the current visit of Commissioner Vestager to Japan for meetings with Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) Chairman Sugimoto and other political counterparts to discuss the role of competition policy to enhance competitiveness. Commissioner Vestager and JFTC Chairman Sugimoto also discussed the latest developments in competition policy and enforcement. Commissioner Vestager noted with interest the draft JFTC guidelines on Competition Policy and Public Support for Revitalization and shared the European Commission's experience in dealing with rescue and restructuring aid. (Source: [European Commission](#))

Mercosur ready to exchange trade offers with the EU in April

The EU and the Mercosur trade bloc are ready to exchange trade proposals in April and revive stalled talks to open their economies. Mercosur is the EU's eighth-largest trade partner, while the EU is Mercosur's largest investor. The two blocs officially relaunched frozen trade negotiations (which started in 1999), at a summit in Madrid in May, 2010, and the objective since then has been to negotiate a comprehensive deal. Talks have been tough, with both sides seeking to ensure the deal addresses everything from industrial goods and agricultural production to services and intellectual property. Attempts to move forward, most recently at an EU-Latin American summit in Santiago in 2013, failed because of Argentina's blockade. Although Uruguay currently holds the Mercosur rotating chair, the changing of the guard in Argentina has played a crucial role in reviving the negotiations, since the previous administration of Cristina Fernandez was reluctant to move forward, as her government privileged local jobs, domestic industry and markets. (Source: [Euractiv](#))

Commission to publish EU road safety statistics for 2015

On 30 March 2016, the European Commission will unveil the EU road safety statistics for 2015. They will include aggregated and country-by-country figures. For the first time this year, the Commission will also be able to produce an EU-wide estimate of the number of people seriously injured on European roads. Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc will present the 2015 EU road safety statistics on Wednesday 30 March at midday in the Commission press room. Available on [EbS](#). It will be followed by a technical briefing open to accredited journalists only. A multilingual press release and a background note will be available on the day. (Source: [European Commission](#))

Week ahead

European Commission

Wednesday 23 March

- Action Plan on VAT – the Commission is expected to publish an action plan aimed at improving the VAT regime in the EU

European Parliament

Tuesday 22 March

- EMIS – Exchange of views with DG GROW, DG CLIMA and DG ENV
- EMPL and FEMM – Creating Labour Market conditions favourable for work-life balance
- EMPL – Implementation of the FTA between the EU and the Republic of Korea

Wednesday 23 March

- EMPL – The Single Market Strategy; How to best harness the job creation potential of SMEs

