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When will you buy an electric car?

In April the European Union set out an ambitious Strategy on clean and energy efficient vehicles. The Strategy builds on existing ongoing measures and sets out medium to long-term actions. Its aim is to reduce the negative impact of road transport on the environment and enhance the competitiveness of European companies. Up to 40% of energy in Europe is consumed by transport. New green technologies used in the automotive industry could contribute considerably to CO₂ emissions reduction. However, research and development in green technologies must be supported and new standardization has to be agreed. The biggest challenge is to rethink the whole concept of transport and convince consumers to buy green vehicles. Nevertheless, this is a difficult task as the infrastructure (charging stations, grids) and compatibility of standards are still lacking. Stakeholders interested in electric cars met on 6th October during the [Open Days 2010](#) to discuss the main challenges of this green technology sector.

David VALENTINY, Counsellor to Wallonia Economy Minister, presented the Belgians presidency priorities in the field of electric transport and stated that the automotive industry is a case study for energy challenges. *"The public sector is a great player in initiating pilot projects in this field, especially via Public Private Partnerships"*, he said. Many green projects in Belgium are running with public support such as incubators for clean mobility and charging stations networks. SMEs are exposed to fast global development and they cannot adapt so quickly without public help. Public investments in China represent 60% of global investment in technology development. *"Europe is lagging behind by 19%. A comprehensive strategy must be developed to encourage activities in clean technology sectors,"* he added. The Strategy adopted in April is being enforced by a series of actions including a preparatory meeting of HLG CARS 21. **Giacomo MATTINÓ**, Deputy Head of Automotive Unit at DG Enterprises&Industry, said the Strategy was only the first step and more actions are to be launched. This year, among others, the Commission has proposed a regulation on type-approval of two and three-wheelers while other measures aim to reinforce road security of electric vehicles. Moreover, targeted actions will focus on promoting a "green" identity of vehicles. European Standardization bodies should ensure interoperability of electric vehicles and infrastructure. Member States will have the opportunity to participate in European sectorial councils of competences and use the European Social Fund to adapt the skills of employees of the automotive sector. *"Regional dimension is very important. Regions are responsible for infrastructure and able to realize pilot projects"*, Mattinó pointed out.

Tomáš CHMELÍK, Head of Clean Technology Dept. of CEZ Group, said that CEZ is quickly increasing its activities in the field of clean and innovative technologies". In 2010 it is leading a project called E-Mobility with 70 Peugeot cars (under negotiation) aimed at creating a charging infrastructure in the Czech Republic and at working on standardisation. The project follows an integrated approach going from information campaigns, through the building up of infrastructure and to providing electricity. Tenders launched by CEZ within the project are also open to SMEs. *"There is already a lot of interest and it is a big opportunity for them"*, Chmelík said. According to him electric vehicles will play an important role in the future. Most carmakers and analysts believe in 10-20% market penetration for electric cars by 2020. *"Electric cars will bring a lot of opportunities"* said **MEP Giles Chichester**. *"There are potential technical risks due to an increase in the demand on our electricity supplies, as well as considerable infrastructure investment costs at the beginning. However, with the appropriate infrastructure and a necessary change in public and political opinions, we could be more encouraged to buy electric vehicles."* **Andrea BENASSI**, Secretary General of UEAPME, called on the Commission to simplify the access of SMEs to EU funding and to cut red tape. *"Today it is very complex to obtain EU funding for SMEs. As a result, EU money often does not reach smaller companies"*, he said.

The event was organized by CEBRE – Czech Business Representation to the EU in cooperation with CEZ Group and UEAPME. For further details contact Michal Kadera, Director of CEBRE at Michal.Kadera@cebre.cz.