

MindsinMotion.net jubilee: Ivan Hodac of ACEA speaks his mind

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To celebrate the first *MindsinMotion.net* jubilee we go back in time with various speakers at our founding conference.

[F074 Image 1](#)

“Things have changed tremendously,” says Ivan Hodac when asked to look back on his expectations five years ago. Hodac is secretary general of the European Automobile Manufacturers Organisation ACEA.

Surprised

In 2004 ACEA still thought the idea of advertising 'green' cars was a "difficult marketing strategy", at least for the time being. “Back then fuel efficiency, as I prefer to call it, was only number five or six on the wish list of new car buyers, today it is near the top. Environment and climate are part of the reason, but another reason is the fact that fuels have become very expensive. The economic crisis played an important role in the popularity of fuel efficient cars.”

Also, the industry has made enormous progress, so that fuel efficiency has become a marketing tool, not just for small cars but for SUVs and other big cars as well. This year's Frankfurt motor show was all about fuel efficiency and CO2 emissions.”

Hodac sounds genuinely surprised. “The developments of these past five years were unthinkable,” he continues. “And the car industry was not pushed into this, but has been a driving force itself.”

No volunteers

That brings us to a second question. Two of the [conference conclusions](#) of 2004 seem contradictory.

First of all: “There is an urgent need for short-term action on regulated emissions of PM10 and NOx [...]. The Euro-standards have proven particularly effective in reducing air-polluting emissions. The Environment Council's call to the Commission on 14 October 2004 to come up

with proposals in the short term for further tightening of emission standards enjoys wide support.”

But another conclusion reads: “The most effective EU-instruments to reduce CO2 emissions from passenger cars are the *voluntary agreements* with the car industry. This approach deserves to be continued, but must become more ambitious if emissions are to be reduced to a sustainable level.”

Hodac: “I dare say that nobody in the automobile industry wants a voluntary agreement. First of all because it always leads to criticism, but mostly because that would lead to different commitments between various car manufacturers. It would be unclear who would have to do what. We want a level playing field, so that nobody can misuse it and nobody gets competitive advantages of any kind.

Enough is enough

Would more regulations be acceptable to the car industry? “The current standards are acceptable,” says Hodac. “They set goals for 2015 and I’m convinced that we will be able to reach them.

“This industry has never had anything against regulation,” Hodac repeats, “but we don’t want unreasonable regulations that would make us less competitive to other parts of the world or lead to undue costs. This is not only in our interest, but in the interest of consumers as well, for otherwise cars would become unaffordable.

”Wouldn’t that be great for the environment? “No,” Hodac claims, “it would even be counterproductive as people would continue driving older, less safe and less ‘green’ cars.” Hodac adds: “The industry is making huge investments in fuel efficiency which is very expensive. A key question to society is how to share the burden.”

So Hodac implies that if car manufacturers wouldn’t be selling enough cars, they would not invest in clean technologies. But if fuel efficient cars are in vogue right now, the car industry would be crazy not to produce and improve them.

[F074 Image 2](#)

We've done our bit

So which further steps towards sustainability goals are necessary in the next five years? Back in 2004 Hodac gave a [presentation](#) on the 'integrated approach' to sustainable mobility. He is still of

the opinion that: “Real results can only come from an integrated approach. That means a combination of infrastructure, transport management, driving behaviour and fuel industry.”

Have other parties done their share? He becomes more vehement at this point. “It may sound strange coming from me, but *nothing* has been done about infrastructure because the European Union cannot oblige countries to work on it,” he says. “The same goes for driving behaviour, whereas a lot could be won if eco-driving would be taught in driving schools. And the fuel industry are dragging their feet. Second generation biofuels are ready for the market, but there is not enough regulation in this field either.

“Bear in mind that new technologies touch only new cars, while in these other fields older cars can become more fuel efficient as well.”

Catch the baton...

LowCVP director Greg Archer concluded his interview with a question to Ivan Hodac:

“What you presented in 2004 became known as the integrated approach and lead to the [Cars 21 process](#). The motor industry back then argued that more had to be done about infrastructure, integrated regulation et cetera, instead of focusing on vehicle technology. Looking back do you think real progress has been made on the integrated approach and Cars21 actually changed anything?”

A good question, as the roads are still congested and the air is far from clean.

Hodac: “Air pollution comes from old cars, which proves my point of the need for integrated policies. As I said, traffic management, for instance adjustment of working hours, can make a difference. And with Euro VI emissions standards, filters and everything, new cars are totally clean. So I say: 'First get old cars off the road.' People drive fourteen, fifteen, sixteen year old cars. When you look at recent scrapping schemes in Eastern European countries you see 25 year old cars being brought in. I'm convinced that with some incentives natural replacement will do a lot of good, not only to the environment, but to safety as well. We're moving in the right direction and things have picked up a pace.”

... and pass it on

Ivan Hodac in turn passes the baton to the European Commission spokesperson for Transport Fabio Pirotta:

“In the integrated approach it is essential to combine efforts made by the car industry with those of the fuel industry, of drivers themselves (think eco-driving) and with infrastructural measures such as traffic management (flexible working hours, for instance). What are you doing to promote the integrated approach beyond pushing the car industry? More in detail, what is happening with the infrastructure directive, which is being blocked in Parliament by various member states, what is being done to push the fuel/oil industry as well and why is there no EU-wide eco-driving promotion?”