

To:

Ursula von der Leyen – President of the European Commission

CC:

Stéphane Séjourné – Executive Vice President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy

Wopke Hoekstra - Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth

Michael McGrath – Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection

Maroš Šefčovič – Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency

Apostolos Tzitzikostas – Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism

27 March 2025

Dear President Von der Leyen,

The EU is entering difficult and uncharted trade negotiations with the United States, and there is much attention on the automotive sector. We ask you, in the strongest possible terms, not to offer 'equivalence' or mutual recognition of US vehicle safety and environmental standards as part of these negotiations.

This would be a catastrophic mistake, and the consequences would be measured in the deaths of men, women and children on EU roads. It would also severely undermine the EU's single market and world-leading automotive safety standards, and lead to unfair competition in the vehicle market.

Both EU and foreign vehicle manufacturers currently compete on a level playing field¹ with respect to product safety, sustainability and environmental requirements. Granting an unsupported and blatantly incorrect label of 'equivalence' to vehicles falling below EU standards would severely bias competition in favour of non-EU manufacturers and negatively impact the EU goals to reduce road deaths and transition to cleaner vehicles.

EU and US vehicle standards are not equivalent. During negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership a decade ago, a study commissioned by the car industry found that EU models were, on average, 33% safer in terms of risk of a serious injury in common front-side crashes.²

The US has no mandatory safety standards for pedestrian protection on new vehicles.

¹ With the exception of vehicles imported inappropriately through a loophole in the Individual Vehicle Approval process - which the Commission is committed to addressing, as outlined in the Automotive Action Plan.

² <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/112977>

In the years since TTIP, EU and US safety standards have diverged further. Since last year, all vehicles sold on the EU market have required mandatory fitting of multiple safety technologies such as automated emergency braking and emergency lane-keeping systems. These new standards are predicted to prevent thousands of deaths over the coming years. The vast majority of them are currently not mandatory in the US.

Since 2013, road deaths in the EU have decreased by 16%. In the US they have increased by 25%.³

The US approach on vehicle automation is also not compatible with EU standards. Unproven partial automation technologies have been permitted on vehicles on US roads and linked to numerous fatal collisions.⁴ The EU, meanwhile, follows standards and test requirements agreed at EU level and at the UNECE.

While we understand the need to find a constructive outcome and prevent a trade war, we want to stress that the protection of European citizens from death or serious injury on the road is non-negotiable.

Yours sincerely,

Antonio Avenoso, Executive Director, European Transport Safety Council
Laurianne Krid, Director General, Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) Region I
Stephen Russell, Director-General, ANEC - The European Consumer Voice in Standardisation
André Sobczak, Secretary General, Eurocities
Robert Štaba, President, FEVR - European Federation of Road Traffic Victims
Barbara Stoll, Director, Clean Cities Campaign
William Todts, Executive Director, Transport & Environment
Karen Vancluysen, Secretary General, POLIS
Geert van Waeg, President, International Federation of Pedestrians
Jill Warren, CEO, European Cyclists' Federation

For further information:

<https://etsc.eu/briefing-on-risks-to-the-eu-vehicle-market-and-road-safety-of-recognising-us-market-vehicles-as-equivalent/>

³ The figures for pedestrians and cyclists in the US are considerably worse with a 48% increase in pedestrian deaths between 2014 and 2024, and a 53% increase in cyclist deaths between 2013 and 2023.

⁴ For example: <https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/HWY24FH006.aspx>, <https://www.axios.com/2024/04/26/tesla-autopilot-crashes-elon-musk>, <https://abcnews.go.com/Business/tesla-driving-crash-reports-prompt-nhtsa-investigation/story?id=114922283>, <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/us-traffic-safety-regulator-opens-probe-into-about-26-mln-tesla-vehicles-2025-01-07/>