

JOINT LETTER

Brussels, 27 October 2017

Automotive industry position - Vehicle keys do not fall under the scope of the Nickel Restriction According to REACH Annex XVII (No. 27)

The automotive industry is committed to ensure the safe handling of its products, especially those parts of a vehicle, which come in direct contact with the users.

To protect the public from becoming sensitized (allergic) to nickel, the EU has established legislation since 1994 (i.e. Nickel Directive 94/27/EC, incorporated in 2009 as a restriction under REACH, Annex XVII, Entry 27). The restriction focuses on reducing and avoiding nickel exposure from body piercings and “articles intended to come into direct and prolonged skin contact” such as jewellery items, which are reported to be the main sources of nickel allergies. Overall, the automotive industry supports the aim of the restriction and also the need to provide practical guidance. However, we have significant concerns about the inclusion of vehicle keys into the list of articles to be covered by the restriction.

Due to its specific properties, Nickel is used in a wide range of applications in the automotive industry, mostly as alloys and coatings to ensure compliance to technical performance and quality requirements. For example, the blade of a vehicle key has performance requirements that provide the proper endurance, corrosion resistance and aesthetic requirements while still meeting performance requirements required for operating vehicle ignition and locking systems and maintaining the ability to easily cut the key blades in the series and spare parts production (like emergency service for lost keys).

ECHA is defining the “prolonged skin contact” to be a **continuous** contact for at least 10 minutes on at least 3 occasions within a 2-week time frame (or **continuous** contact for at least 30 minutes on at least 1 occasion within a 2-week time frame). This does not match the intended use of vehicle keys, not even under reasonable foreseeable conditions. None of the vehicle key components containing nickel, like the key blade or key fob, have skin contact which matches with this definition. Besides this the key grip is usually covered by a polymer which also reduces the exposure.

In the case that vehicle keys would finally remain in the guidance, the impact on current vehicle programs, spare parts, series parts and those keys currently under development is unforeseeable and could have detrimental economic impacts. There are significant technical barriers to changing the material composition of vehicle

ignition keys. Providing additional coatings or removing Nickel would cause changes to the key hardness which, in most cases, will result in the need to re-design ignition systems to ensure their durability against the hardness of the new key. In the automotive industry, there needs to be significant lead time (up to five years) for automakers working with their supply chains to design, validate and manufacture new parts, given the number and complexity of the vehicles affected. No transitional period is foreseen for Annex XVII (No. 27) in the REACH regulation.

The automotive industry supports the development of the guidance document. However, extensions of the intended scope of the restriction by the inclusion of further articles can only be supported, if these additions are scientifically justified and having a verifiable positive impact on further reduction of new cases of nickel allergy. However, rather than extending the scope of the restriction to articles that are not relevant causes of nickel allergy, we consider the strict enforcement of the existing restrictions to be the most appropriate and effective way to protect public health and further reducing nickel allergy prevalence.

In light of this discussion, we request that this guidance state that automotive uses of nickel in vehicle keys be specifically exempted from the Annex XVII restriction.



European
Automobile
Manufacturers
Association



About ACEA

- ACEA represents the 15 Europe-based car, van, truck and bus manufacturers: BMW Group, DAF Trucks, Daimler, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, Ford of Europe, Hyundai Motor Europe, Iveco, Jaguar Land Rover, PSA Group, Renault Group, Toyota Motor Europe, Volkswagen Group, Volvo Cars, and Volvo Group.
- More information can be found on www.acea.be or @ACEA_eu.

About CLEPA

CLEPA is the European Association of Automotive Suppliers. Over 120 of the world's most prominent suppliers for car parts, systems and modules and 23 National trade associations and European sector associations are members of CLEPA, representing more than 3 thousand companies, employing more than 5 million people and covering all products and services within the automotive supply chain. Based in Brussels, Belgium, CLEPA is recognised as the natural discussion partner by the European Institutions, United Nations and fellow associations (ACEA, JAMA, MEMA, etc.).

Facts about the European automotive industry

- Some **12 million** people are employed in the European automotive industry
- European automotive suppliers directly employ **5 million** people
- European automotive suppliers invest **€22bn** in RDI per year. They are the biggest private investor into research and innovation
- Per year, **18 million** vehicles are manufactured in Europe, contributing to the stability and growth of the European economy

Attachment

The Automotive Industry is convinced that the metal parts of vehicle keys are not intended to come into prolonged contact with the human skin in a way that would cause an adverse effect, not even under reasonable foreseeable conditions. We would like to provide 3 typical examples of vehicle keys:

1. Flip key example → Highlighted in red colour are the metal parts with potential Nickel content:



2. Simple vehicle key → Highlighted in red colour is the metal part with potential Nickel content:



3. Emergency key example → Highlighted in yellow / orange colour are the metal parts with potential Nickel content:

