EU ministers call for common electric car strategy

February 9 2010

Spanish Minister of industry Miguel Sebastian (C) sits in an electric car with Renault President in Spain, Jean Pierre Laurent (R), as they attend an exhibition about electric vehicles at Kursaal palace in the northern Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian. EU industry ministers on Tuesday pressed the European Commission to establish a common strategy to develop electric cars.

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Ministers and industry representatives discussed the future of electric vehicles, which are seen as both an environmental necessity and an opportunity for economic growth, at an informal meeting in San Sebastian, northern Spain.

Madrid currently holds the rotating EU presidency and the Spanish

Industry Minister Miguel Sebastian said he "believed leadership on electric cars must be driven by communal institutions."

Spain wants the electric car to feature in the EU's 2020 strategy, the economic reform project aimed at ensuring prosperity and sustainable growth for Europe.

Plans for electric cars are currently scattered around EU member states and auto manufacturers, and Madrid wants the European Commission to prepare a plan for a common strategy by May.

Fierce competition in the electric car sector is expected to come from the United States and China, and EU ministers urged swift action.

But they did not discuss in detail the awkward question of public funding -- which manufacturers have asked for to kick start the sector.

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