

10 tips for finding buyers in the European automotive parts and components sector

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Finding buyers in the automotive parts and components sector in order to become more firmly established in the market is easier now than 10-20 years ago. Below, you find a lot of tips how you can get into contact with potential customers.

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1. In-depth market research

Start by validating and analysing your first priority markets. Do not underestimate the power of local supplier search engines (for example, [Autocluster.NRW](#)), where you can select according to supplier name, product category and/or specific automotive parts, components and systems. Investigate which markets offer the best opportunities for your products and engineering services.

To identify better where your potential buyer is positioned in the supply chain, take a look at CBI's study of [the channels and segments - automotive parts and components sector](#).

Check valuable market data, regulations and legislation (car registrations, historical series and economic forecasts) at [ACEA](#) (European Car Makers Association), [CLEPA](#) (European Association of Automotive Suppliers) and the [European Commission](#).

Update your market insight at [PRODCOM statistics](#) on the European production of manufactured materials and goods such as chemicals, plastics, metal parts, iron castings, tubes and lots of other relevant parts.

Check websites of European sector-specific market research companies and online portals for supplier studies, market data, statistics, the latest trends and services to support your market entry (market and competitor analysis):

- [CBI Demand for automotive parts and components in Europe](#)
- [CBI Automotive trends](#)
- [CBU Automotive product fact sheets](#)
- [ANP](#) - Automotive market research and analysis
- [Autofacts](#) - Specialists focused on industry-specific issues and analysis
- [Automotive News](#) - News about the automotive industry
- [INOVEV](#) - Automotive data and analysis platform
- [IHS Markit](#) - Automotive data and analysis platform
- [JATO](#) - Automotive data and analysis platform
- [Just Auto](#) - Automotive industry analysis portal

- [LMC Automotive](#) – Automotive forecasting sales and production
- [Knibb, Gormezano & Partners](#) – Consulting services to the automotive industry
- [MarkLines](#) – Automotive industry portal including automotive data and statistics
- [Powersys](#) – Automotive market research and analysis
- [WardsAuto](#) - Automotive industry news, data and statistics

2. Check members and the news of associated organisations

In Europe, there are several national and international organisations and associations, and their members offer valuable hints and information for you to find buyers, importers, exporters and distributors. On national websites, you will mostly find indices of members that can be searched for products, materials, locations and/or names.

The following are important country associations:

- [Automobile Industry Association of Austria](#)
- [Belgian Federation of Automobile and Motorcycle Industries](#)
- [Association of Car Manufacturers and their Authorised Representatives for Bulgaria](#)
- [Automotive Industry Association of the Czech Republic](#)
- [Danish Car Importers Association](#)
- [Union of Estonian Car Sales and Service Enterprises](#)
- [German Association of the Automotive Industry](#)
- [Association of Motor Vehicle Importers' Representatives in Greece](#)
- [Association of the Hungarian Automotive Industry](#)
- [Society of the Irish Motor Industry](#)
- [Italian Association of the Automobile Industry](#)
- [Automotive Association of Latvia](#)
- [Lithuanian Autoentrepreneurs Association](#)
- [Motorcycle and Automobile Industry Association of the Netherlands](#)
- [Automobile Importers' Association of Norway](#)
- [Polish Automotive Industry Association](#)
- [Automobile Association of Portugal](#)
- [Automobile Manufacturers' Association of Romania](#)
- [Automotive Industry Association of the Slovak Republic](#)
- [Association of Automobile Manufacturers and Authorised Importers of Slovenia](#)
- [Spanish Association of Car and Truck Manufacturers](#)
- [Swedish Association of Automobile Manufacturers and Importers](#)
- [UK Country Organisation Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd](#)

3. Make use of social media

Social media can be very helpful in introducing your company and product brands to foreign countries and increasing their popularity. Go to business networking platforms such as [LinkedIn](#), or country-specific expert websites such as [XING](#) in Germany and [Viadeo](#) in France. Find the expert websites most useful to you and your products and upload personal profiles, comments and articles to help with exposure.

Set up your own [Facebook](#) page, [Youtube](#) Channel or [Tumblr](#) hub. Use blogs and [Twitter](#) to promote and update your company's latest activities and areas of expertise. Examples include the recent campaigns of MINI on Tumblr and BMW on Facebook.

4. Regularly visit and exhibit at automotive-related trade fairs

Trade fairs are great occasions to meet potential buyers face-to-face. If you have the budget and the time to attend and exhibit at trade fairs, you may find that they are the best places to present your products.

To get the most out of a trade fair, always plan ahead (have a goal, know your budget and inventory needs, identify exhibitors and set up appointments in advance).

Have a look at the online exhibition guides. They provide an excellent opportunity to prepare yourself to identify the right companies and talk to the right participants. Most trade fairs have an alphabetical company and/or product index on their website.

Below you can find a selection of some of the top automotive-related trade fairs in the EU in the sector.

Austria: [AutoZum Salzburg](#) - International trade fair for automobile workshops and fuel station equipment, auto spare parts and accessories

Belarus: [Autoservice, Mechanics, Autocomponents & Int'l Automotive, Garage Equipment, Automotive Spare Parts and Accessories Exhibition](#)

France: [Mondial de L'Automobile](#)

[JEC World](#) - The largest international gathering of composites professionals

Germany: [Automechanika Frankfurt](#): The world's leading trade fair for the automotive industry and service industry, unique in terms of its product range and variety. The fair is the shop window for innovations in the automotive aftermarket across the entire value chain. As an international meeting place for all market participants from the industry, dealership trade, and maintenance and repair segment, it provides a major platform for business and technological knowledge transfer

[Blechexpo](#) - International trade fair for sheet metal working

[Composites Europe](#)

[eCarTec](#): Trade fair for electric and hybrid mobility

[euromold](#): World fair for mold- and patternmaking, tooling, design, additive manufacturing and product development.

[Experience Composites](#) - Leading trade exhibition for plastics and composites suppliers

[FAKUMA](#) - International trade fair for plastics processing

[IAA Cars Frankfurt/Main](#)

[IAA Commercial Vehicles, Hanover](#): Leading international trade fair for mobility, transportation and logistics

[K](#) - World's No 1 trade fair for plastics and rubber

[METAV](#) - International exhibition for metalworking technologies

[Tire Technology](#) - Europe's leading international tire design and manufacturing exhibition

Russia: [International exhibition of automotive parts, components, car maintenance equipment and products](#)

Spain: [Motortec Automechanika Madrid](#): The Spanish edition of the world's leading trade fair for the automotive industry, catering for trade visitors from Spain, Portugal, Latin America and North Africa

Switzerland: [Geneva International Motor Show](#)

United Kingdom: [Automechanika Birmingham](#): The UK's leading exhibition for the automotive supply chain and aftermarket

5. Make use of online trade directories and local cluster organisations

In the automotive parts and components sector, there are many online platforms and country-specific local cluster organisations through which you can find buyers. Some of these will require membership and/or official registration before you can search for potential buyers.

Some online registries and cluster organisations offer a free trial period, so that you can check in advance if the platform is worth paying a membership fee.

Helpful online supplier directories and registries are the following:

- [Worldwide index of the automotive industry](#): The automotive index currently has more than 4,500 registered companies and institutions that can be found through 30,000 links
- [Automotive Supplier Finder](#): Search the UK SMMT's association directory by keywords or browse using the "browse by categories" button. Here, you can find companies categorised by product and the services that they supply, all or part of the company name or brand name.
- [Automotive components and parts](#): Automotive industry B2B marketplace. Search by product and/or company name.
- [Groupauto](#): The No 1 automotive trading group in the UK, including 360 member companies.

Local country supplier cluster organisations are:

Austria: The [Automotive Cluster \(AC\)](#) is an interbranch network that supports innovative strengths and international competitiveness of companies in the automotive sector

[ACStyria Autocluster](#), Austrian supplier cluster organisation

[Clusterland Oberösterreich GmbH – Automotive Cluster](#), Austrian supplier cluster organisation

[Automotive Cluster Vienna Region](#), Austrian supplier cluster organisation

Belgium: [Flanders' DRIVE](#), Belgium supplier cluster organisation

France: [MOV'EO – Technopôle du Madrillet](#), French supplier cluster organisation

Germany: [Auto.Cluster NRW](#): Local German supplier cluster organisation

[BAIKA bayern innovativ](#): Local German supplier cluster organisation

[Automotive Rheinland](#): Local German supplier cluster organisation

[Automotive Thüringen e.V.](#): Local German supplier cluster organisation

[Cluster MAHREG Automotive](#): Local German supplier cluster organisation

[NoAE / Rhein-Main-Neckar – EWF Institute](#): Free, open initiative for the automobile and supplier industry and intercompany professional network with the objective to intensify strategic, organisational and technological exchange of ideas and experiences between companies

Hungary: [North Hungarian Automotive Cluster](#): Hungarian supplier cluster organisation

Poland: [Automotive Cluster](#): Polish supplier cluster organisation

The Netherlands: [Automotive Technology Centre \(ATC\)](#): Cluster organisation that stimulates technological innovation and cooperation. Its mission is to strengthen the international technology and business position of the Dutch automotive sector, and grow and preserve this important industry and its spin-offs within the greater Amsterdam area and the rest of the Netherlands

Spain: [ACICAE – Cluster de Automoción de Euskadi](#), Spanish supplier cluster organisation

Sweden: [SAFER – Vehicle and Traffic Safety Centre](#): Competence centre where 34 partners from the Swedish automotive industry, academia and authorities cooperate to make a centre of excellence within the field of vehicle and traffic safety

The United Kingdom: [European Automotive Strategy Network \(EASN\)](#)

6. Your website is your global business card to attract potential buyers

A professional and transparent website is a must-have for everyone. Buyers should be able easily to find your product and service portfolio as well as technologies and R&D capabilities. Show your references and business cases to demonstrate and underscore your expertise. Offer material for downloading, so that potential buyers will learn more about products, specifications and everything else which you believe might be useful to attract future business.

- Your website should be up to date and designed by a professional
- Your website must be written in English in addition to your own language, and perhaps other languages may be added
- Your website should be easy to find with the help of search engines
- Google AdWords could increase the traffic on your webpage through keywords

7. Send a mailshot, newsletter or press release

After finalising your list of potential buyers and local key contacts, you need to draw attention to your products and services. Regular contact with the press is particularly helpful to publish your company's name in well-known magazines.

- Evaluate and update your list before sending out emails or other publications
- Set priorities in terms of personalised and mass-marketing activities
- Personalise all email correspondence with a short attractive headline. The content should be to the point and concise
- Do not send newsletters too often – two to four times per year is enough. Your newsletter should contain news about your company, case studies, references as well as the USPs of your products and services
- Offer recipients the possibility to contact you as well as to unsubscribe
- Follow-up activities should be carefully planned after some weeks – do not offend new contacts by pushing too much (phone calls, follow-up email, etc.)
- A press release must contain REAL news that might attract a lot of buyers (product advantages, new technology, expanding into new markets, etc.). Content has to be clear and concise, no more than one page including contact details

8. Get in touch with government institutions

Contact your country's chamber of trade, chamber of commerce and other government agencies that support business transactions between your native country and intended European buyers.

There are also local, country-specific government organisations in Europe that promote imports and investment from developing countries. They offer companies up-to-date information on the local market, international tender opportunities, investment and development projects, legal information, customs regulations, as well as access to international business partners.

Examine with those authorities whether there are specific opportunities for your country and sector.

Examples:

Belgium: [Trade for Development Centre \(BTC\)](#) – Belgian Development Agency (BTC) programme that helps foreign companies to get in touch with Belgian companies

The Czech Republic: [CzechInvest Investment and Business Development Agency](#) offers advice and support to existing and new entrepreneurs and foreign investors in the Czech Republic

Finland: [Finnpartnership](#)'s mission is to increase commercial cooperation and promote business partnerships between companies in developing countries

France: [Business France, the national agency](#) that supports the international development of the French economy as well as promoting and facilitating international investment in France

Germany: [Trade and Invest](#) helps any foreign company to explore avenues for new business opportunities

Italy: [Invitalia](#) is the Italian National Agency for inward investment and economic development, owned by the Italian Ministry of Economy

The Netherlands: [CBI \(Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries\)](#) assists organisations in developing countries to export their products to Europe. CBI offers export coaching and assists institutional development, HR development, market intelligence and more

[Invest in Holland - the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency \(NFIA\)](#) is prepared to assist companies at every stage of establishing or expanding operations in the Netherlands

Poland: [Invest in Poland](#) – Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency (PAIIZ), helps investors to enter the Polish market and find the best ways to utilise the possibilities available to them

Russia: [Russian Direct Investment Fund \(RDIF\)](#) is a fund established in 2011 by the Russian government to make equity investments, primarily in the Russian economy

Switzerland: [Global Enterprise](#) helps SMEs in selected partner countries and sectors to export their high-quality products to Europe

9. Use your own network, business partners, advertising and conferences

Sometimes, it is easier than expected to do business. Tell your friends, clients, suppliers, business partners and others in your network about your future plans and capabilities, and clearly describe your goals and targets. Carefully cultivate new business opportunities in order to attract new buyers.

An advertisement in a widespread automotive magazine or a banner placed at a specific material-oriented online news platform will very likely attract some new business contacts and potential buyers. Within the automotive industry, there are hundreds of magazines and news platforms – so here are only a few examples of websites, magazines, etc., that you might consider:

[European Aftermarket Business Platform](#)

[Aluminium Manual](#) – providing technical information on aluminium automotive applications

[Automotive News Europe](#) – Online automotive magazine including articles, interviews, facts, figures and the latest trends

[Automobil Produktion](#) – German online automotive magazine including articles, interviews, facts, figures and the latest trends

[Bioplastics magazine](#) - Online resource for readers seeking a bioplastics community that offers reliable news and informative content with immediate appeal

[European Polyurethane Journal](#) – Online source including articles, company information, latest products and trends, interviews and statistics about polyurethane

[Injectionworld](#) - The global magazine for injection moulders, mould makers and product designers. Published monthly, it covers developments in injection moulding machines, ancillaries, tooling, software, polymers, additives and key end-use markets

[JEC Group Knowledge and Networking](#) – Online source including events, exhibition dates, news, a shop, education, articles, company information, products and statistics about plastics and composites

[Plastics News Europe](#) - Online source including articles, company information, latest products and trends, interviews and statistics about plastics and composites

[Plastics Information Europe](#) - Online source including polymer price indices, articles, company information, latest products and trends, interviews and statistics about plastics and composites

[Reinforced Plastics](#) - Online source including news, webinars, comments, features, podcasts, products and events about plastics and composites

[Worldautosteel](#) - The automotive group of the World Steel Association, comprised of 21 major global steel producers, also from Europe


10. Try and understand buyers before contacting them

It is very important to gain in-depth knowledge about your potential buyers before contacting them. You have to bear in mind that buyers in the automotive parts and components sector are contacted by potential suppliers every day and that convincing them is very difficult. If you are not well-prepared, you do not stand a chance. Take a look at the [CBI Doing business in Europe document](#), which provides valuable advice about aspects to be considered before entering the European Original Equipment and/or aftermarket, and advice on topics such as market monitoring, opportunities and risks, different business cultures, etc.


This survey was compiled for CBI by Marktonderzoekbureau Molgo in collaboration with CBI sector expert Peter Nagel, anp management consulting GmbH

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