

VDA, VDIK and ZDK: Situation at registration offices endangers economic recovery in vehicle industry and trade



The wait times at some German motor-vehicle registration offices are running into weeks, which is increasing the economic burden on the automotive business and jeopardizing both jobs and firms. The German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA), the Association of International Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (VDIK) and the German Federation for Motor Trades and Repairs (ZDK) are therefore calling on the federal states and municipalities to institute swift and decisive countermeasures - including the rapid and comprehensive introduction of the digital registration procedure known as “i-Kfz.”

The internet-based “i-Kfz” procedure enables private customers to register new vehicles and re-register other vehicles without having to appear in person at the registration authority, which would make the process more efficient. The German Government put the legal requirements for online registrations in place in October 2019, but in many registration offices the system cannot yet be applied. “The restrictions introduced in the showrooms and registration offices to tackle coronavirus have left the dealerships housing thousands of new and used cars that cannot be handed over to the customers. This is hugely damaging to the motor-

vehicle trade and the automotive industry, and angers customers,” said VDA President Hildegard Müller.

The Government had already provided assistance to the federal states, including the option of simplified procedures, Hildegard Müller explained. She stressed, “Alongside sufficient personnel for the authorities, the consistent introduction of the ‘i-Kfz’ procedure could make a decisive contribution to reducing the large backlog of applications for registration. Furthermore, ‘i-Kfz’ is in line with health protection considerations and is convenient for vehicle users.”

In practice, many of the vehicle licensing offices do not yet have functional relevant online portals, or else they cannot be found by customers, do not work properly, or it is not possible to complete the whole registration process. Staff shortages at registration offices have reportedly led to wait times of six weeks or more in some cases, principally in major cities such as Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt and Stuttgart.

VDIK President Reinhard Zirpel declared, “In these extremely difficult times, the situation at the authorities must not become an additional factor holding back the economy. The federal states and municipalities must now ensure that all over the country registration offices can resume efficient operation as fast as possible. Long wait times make customers less willing to buy vehicles and thus prevent the auto industry from making a speedy and lasting recovery.”

The automotive industry resumed production after the lockdown, but the situation is still tense. In the first seven months of this year, the number of new passenger car registrations on the German market was 30 percent down on the 2019 figure. “It is incomprehensible that in this situation and in the age of digitization, licensing authorities are not in a position to quickly implement digital procedures for new registrations and changes in registrations,” said ZDK President Jürgen Karpinski.

“Our dealers cannot explain to the customers why they should wait several weeks before they can start using their vehicle that is ready to be driven,” said Jürgen Karpinski. “The authorities should regard themselves as providers of public services and ensure that the processing times are quickly reduced. Furthermore, they should push for the comprehensive implementation of the ‘i-Kfz’ procedure.”

The thousands of vehicles that are currently standing around unregistered in the dealerships are tying up capital that is urgently needed right now for the survival

of motor-vehicle traders. In addition, there are high costs associated with keeping the unused vehicles, especially in cities. The pressure this generates on the sector increases the risk of insolvencies in the automotive trade and is holding back demand.

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