Press Release

6th DEKRA Commercial Vehicle Outlook Conference in Berlin

Driving transformation forward

- Decarbonization of road freight transport remains a major challenge
- Expansion of the charging infrastructure must be significantly accelerated
- Focus on further improving safety equipment

Safe, efficient, and sustainable – these are the requirements for commercial vehicle transport in the future. Experts and practitioners from politics, industry, research, and the transport sector discussed how these goals can be achieved at the 6th DEKRA Commercial Vehicle Outlook Conference in Berlin, Gemany. The focus was on the potential of innovative technologies – from electromobility and alternative fuels, climate targets and fleet emission limits to vehicle safety, automation, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and the importance of data. The scope of the conference ranged from heavy trucks to last-mile delivery.

All forecasts agree: road freight transport will continue to increase in the coming years. According to the European Environment Agency, road freight transport in the EU could rise to around 2,500 billion ton-kilometers by 2050 without political intervention (business-as-usual scenario). This would represent an increase of around 30 percent compared to 1,900 billion ton-kilometers in 2020. This makes it all the more important to set the right course now.

“Future-proof freight transport remains essential for our economies and for society as a whole”, said Jann Fehlauer, Managing Director of DEKRA Automobil GmbH, at the opening of the congress. Safety, efficiency, and sustainability are closely interlinked when it comes to the future viability of commercial vehicles, he said.

These were precisely the topics that took center stage during the two days of the congress in the three parallel thematic strands of commercial vehicle technology, digitalization, and logistics. With around 300 participants, the congress once again underlined its position as a central platform for the entire transport and logistics industry.

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Openness to all types of technology remains important

One of the dominant topics was the question of how decarbonization in road freight transport can be accelerated. In this context, Stefan Schnorr, State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Transport, emphasized that the drive system transition is an active contribution to climate protection and also creates future security for Germany as a business location. “Battery-electric trucks will dominate”, said Schnorr in his keynote speech. Renewable fuels were going to be of great importance for diesel trucks in the existing fleet and for areas that are difficult to electrify. Schnorr added, demand for plant-based fuels, known as HVO (hydrogenated vegetable oils), was rising significantly, but there was a shortage of biogenic raw materials.

Like other speakers at the congress, the State Secretary advocated openness to different types of technology and mentioned alternative drive systems such as hydrogen or hybrid solutions. For Schnorr, it is clear that transport companies need planning security above all else in order to switch to emission-free drives. He described the extension of the toll exemption for electric and hydrogen trucks until mid-2031, which was decided by the EU Parliament, as a “lever with a major impact”.

The future is charging

The German government is planning to accelerate the ramp-up, among other things, by establishing a fast-charging network for trucks along federal highways with 351 stations and 4,200 charging points that meet the requirements of heavy-duty traffic. Johannes Pallasch, head of the National Charging Infrastructure Control Center under the umbrella of NOW GmbH, sees depot charging as a key factor in addition to public charging: “It enables efficient and reliable charging of electric trucks on company premises while they are not in use”, says Pallasch. Another advantage is that the charging infrastructure in depots can be shared by several logistics companies in industrial parks or logistics hubs.

As two presentations at the congress showed, battery replacement could be a future model for heavy commercial vehicles instead of charging breaks. This has already been practiced for years in China and other Asian countries. Currently, a battery change takes six to ten minutes and is expected to be even faster in the future.

Better framework conditions and stable business cases

Thomas Fabian, Commercial Vehicles Director of the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA), emphasized that the industry is facing ambitious climate targets and referred to the applicable EU legislation. According to this

legislation, CO_2 emissions from new trucks and coaches must be reduced by 45 percent by 2030, 65 percent by 2035, and 90 percent by 2040 compared to 2019 levels. “We will only achieve the targets from 2030 onwards if more than a third of all new trucks sold each year from that point onwards are emission-free”, Fabian pointed out. “We are still a long way from this.” According to ACEA, emission-free medium-duty and heavy-duty trucks accounted for just 3.6 percent of new registrations in the EU in the first half of 2025. Almost four out of five zero-emission vehicles were accounted for by the five markets of Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, and France.

Fabian emphasized – as did manufacturers such as Daimler Truck, MAN, and Scania – that vehicles and ranges are not the problem. “Manufacturers have been doing their homework”, said Fabian. A major obstacle, he said, were the continuing unfavorable framework conditions, including those relating to charging infrastructure. Stable business cases were needed along the transport and value chains. “The benefit must be large enough in terms of economically viable total cost of ownership for fleet operators to invest quickly in zero-emission trucks”, Fabian demanded.

In addition to the question of drive systems, various speakers at the 6th DEKRA Commercial Vehicle Outlook Conference addressed the challenges and opportunities that electrification, automation, and digitalization of commercial vehicles present for suppliers and trailer manufacturers in terms of their own product portfolios. Suppliers such as Knorr-Bremse, SAF-Holland, Kögel, Schmitz Cargobull, Krone, and BPW Bergische Achsen presented the concepts they are using to respond to this disruption.

Reliability of automated systems

The safety of commercial vehicles played an important role at the congress. Matthew Avery, Director of Strategic Development at the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP), presented the “Safer Trucks” test series for heavy trucks, which will start in 2024 and be repeated in 2025. Euro NCAP is testing how modern commercial vehicles prevent accidents, protect occupants and at the same time ensure the safety of unprotected road users. Further test series are planned for the coming years, including vehicle environment monitoring, automatic maneuvering, and the safety of smaller distribution trucks. In 2028, Euro NCAP will also conduct its first crash tests for trucks, focusing on the protection of car occupants in head-on collisions. From 2031, passive safety tests will also be included in the assessments. “Manufacturers are responding positively to our tests and using them to further optimize the systems they install”, Avery explained.

As was once again made clear at the congress, DEKRA also plays an important role in safety. Its expertise goes far beyond vehicle inspections and expert appraisals. As Managing Director Jann Fehlauer explained, the expert organization operates Europe's

largest manufacturer-independent testing center for the mobility of the future at the DEKRA Lausitzring in Klettwitz, Brandenburg. “It is not without reason that we have been accredited by Euro NCAP as a laboratory for active safety since the beginning of 2025”, said the DEKRA managing director. The company is a pioneer in scenario-based vehicle testing. So-called swarm tests can be used to simulate traffic scenarios of any complexity in order to test automated driving systems under maximum requirements and thus make their use in road traffic safe.

Added value through intelligent telematics

Experts and practitioners from industry and research also took a close look at the status and further developments in digitization and logistics. The focus was on questions such as: How do customer service, cost efficiency, and sustainability fit together in the last mile? What does the future of urban delivery look like in fundamental terms? What efficiency potential does the combination of smart parking and charging offer? How can AI be used in fleet management to increase safety, efficiency, and sustainability? Among other things, discussions in Berlin also focused on why the commercial vehicle and trailer business of the future can only function with strong partnerships and what competitive advantages can be generated through data-driven energy management in logistics.

About DEKRA

For 100 years, DEKRA has been a trusted name in safety. Founded in 1925 with the original goal of improving road safety through vehicle inspections, DEKRA has grown to become the world's largest independent, non-listed expert organization in the field of testing, inspection, and certification. Today, as a global partner, the company supports its customers with comprehensive services and solutions to drive safety and sustainability forward—fully aligned with DEKRA's anniversary motto, "Securing the Future." In 2024, DEKRA generated revenue of 4.3 billion euros. Around 48,000 employees are providing qualified and independent expert services in approximately 60 countries across five continents. DEKRA holds a Platinum rating from EcoVadis, placing it among the top 1% of the world's most sustainable companies.