Germany to massively expand electric car charging network

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- In this Wednesday, April 27, 2016 photo an e-car is connected with a public charge base in Berlin, Germany. Germany's government wants to massively expand the country's charging network for electric cars with 6.3 billion euros ($6.17 billion) over the next three years as it expects more and more drivers to turn from combustion cars to more climate-friendly electromobility. Credit: AP Photo/Michael Sohn, file

Germany wants to massively expand the country's charging network for electric cars, spending 6.3 billion euros ($6.17 billion) over the next three years as it expects more and more drivers to turn away from combustion cars to more climate-friendly vehicles.

The country's transportation minister on Wednesday presented a "master plan" for improving the charging infrastructure that had been passed by Chancellor Olaf Scholz' cabinet earlier in the day.

"We are not just any automotive location, but a leading one in the world. And that's why it's important to us that what we're preparing succeeds well," Volker Wissing told reporters in Berlin. "We need a forward-looking expansion of the nationwide charging infrastructure that meets demand and is user-friendly."

The share of electric vehicles in Germany grew 24.8% year-on-year to a total share of 14.6% of all newly registered automobiles, according to figures released by the country's Federal Office for Motor Vehicles.

There are around 70,000 charging points in the country but only 11,000 of those are fast-chargers, the ministry said.

That is not enough to sufficiently fulfill the current needs, and it will be even less so as the number of electric cars grows quickly. There is also a big difference in availability of charging points between big cities and rural areas, where it is even harder to find charging stations.

- An electric car is charged at a charging station during a press tour of the plant of the German manufacturer Volkswagen AG (VW) in Zwickau, Germany, Tuesday, May 14, 2019. Germany's government wants to massively expand the country's charging network for electric cars with 6.3 billion euros ($6.17 billion) over the next three years as it expects more and more drivers to turn from combustion cars to more climate-friendly electromobility. Credit: AP Photo/Jens Meyer, file

The German government's goal is to have 1 million publicly accessible charging points in the country by 2030.

In order to boost the number of charging points, the federal government will, among other initiatives provide real estate, especially along highways, where new charging stations can be built. Private owners of

electric cars will be offered subsidized plans to install solar energy panels at their homes to charge their cars overnight.

Electric charging is also supposed to get more user-friendly with new digital offers showing drivers where they can charge their cars on the road or being able to check online how much the different charging points demand, the minister said.

Another issue the government wants to tackle is getting the country's electric grid ready for the increased demand as more people turn to electric cars.

"We are expecting an exponential increase in registered vehicles with battery electric drive in the next few years and must prepare accordingly," the minister said.

Switching Germans from combustion-engine automobiles to electric cars plays a key role in achieving the government's climate targets set for the transport sector.

German Transportation Minister, Volker Wissing addresses the media during a press conference on the 'Master Plan Car Charging Infrastructure' in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, Oct. 19, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Michael Sohn

The transformation to electric cars has also been boosted by a mix of regulatory pressure, tax breaks, improving battery range, and a wider range of vehicles to purchase.

Europe in general is leading the push into battery-powered cars as electric vehicles enter the mainstream and has promised to phase out internal combustion cars by 2035.

But availability of charging points is a problem not just in Germany but almost everywhere across the continent.

"Not only is there an insufficient number of electric charging points along the road networks in most European Union countries, but the vast majority of these do not charge quickly enough," the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association said.

Or as the German minister said: "Electric mobility will only find acceptance if charging is as easy as refueling is today."

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