

Electric vehicle incentives bulgaria

A new bill envisions encouraging electric mobility and incentives to buy electric cars, Environment Minister Borislav Sandov said at a conference on Transport of the Future and Clean Energy.

Bulgaria is set to draft a new law to encourage electric mobility and provide incentives to buy electric vehicles. Plans for the new law were announced by Deputy Prime Minister for Climate Policy and Minister of Environment, Borislav Sandov in April. According to the Minister, the goal is to have at least 30,000 electric vehicles in Bulgaria by 2026.

Data from the European Alternative Fuels Observatory shows Bulgaria lags behind most European countries in terms of electric mobility. Some 3.3% of new passenger car registrations in 2021 were either battery electric vehicles (BEV) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV), while the share in the total fleet was 0.1% in the same year. In comparison, the average shares for the EU were 17.9% and 1.6% respectively.

Affordability is one major reason for the low uptake of electric vehicles in Bulgaria. Average prices for electric vehicles are higher than those for conventionally fuelled vehicles and average household income in Bulgaria is among the lowest in the EU. Unlike many other EU countries, electric vehicle purchases are not yet subsidised in Bulgaria - however, this is about to change.

Bulgaria's Operational Programme Environment 2021-2027, which is EU co-funded, includes a measure to promote the replacement of old passenger vehicles with electric vehicles, providing a subsidy of up to EUR 6,200 per vehicle replaced. In addition, Bulgaria's National Recovery and Resilience Plan also includes financial incentives for zero-emission vehicles.

A second major barrier for the uptake of electric vehicles is the lack of charging infrastructure. It is a classic chicken and egg dilemma where the lack of charging infrastructure deters people and business to buy electric vehicles, while the low number of electric vehicles deters investment in sufficient charging infrastructure.

A specialised commission for the development and encouragement of e-mobility will be appointed by the Government by the end of June 2022. It is to prepare a model of simplified regulation to encourage the construction of charging stations, while a long-term vision for the new law is going to be ready in the autumn.

When it comes to electric cars' popularity in Bulgaria, the numbers don't look impressive yet. But nevertheless, the signs that a shift might be on the way are starting to appear.

In the half of 2023, some 4,353 electric cars were registered in Bulgaria, the latest numbers from Traffic Police reveal. That might not seem like a lot, but compared to the same period in 2022, when 1,669 electric cars received new license plates, this number represents a 160% growth. All in all, as of July 1, there are 8,559

electric vehicles in circulation in Bulgaria.

In the first six months of the year, Tesla ranked first among the most preferred brands, representing 491 of the vehicles, new and used, which can now be spotted in Bulgaria, followed by offerings from Dacia and BMW.

For comparison, in the first half of 2022, 128 Bulgarians chose cars manufactured by Tesla, while only eleven customers opted for a brand-new vehicle. Again, while orders in Bulgaria for new Tesla vehicles stood at 178 in the first half of 2023, compared to the hundreds of thousands of combined new orders elsewhere, this will hardly make a difference for the car producer. However, interest is rising despite the fact that Tesla doesn't even have an official office in Bulgaria.

But lack of direct representation is hardly the only reason for the still insufficient growth of the number of electric cars in Bulgaria, a country which, along with six other EU countries, offers no financial incentives for purchasing electric cars. As of now, electric car owners can rely on the occasional free parking spot, provided they can find it.

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