

Germany wants to introduce controversial car energy consumption labelling

The Bundesrat accepted a controversial law on 11 July introducing new car energy consumption labelling passed by the Bundestag, which will come into force in Germany on 1 October. The new classification is to introduce car CO₂ emission labelling however not in absolute values but considering their weight. The critics of this new regulation from German consumer and ecological organisations are arguing that the new law is misleading customers, and taking into account the car weight in the CO₂ classification was aimed at helping domestic manufacturers of luxury cars.

The new classification is to replace the old rules of measuring energy consumption. The car emission rate has been measured so far by petrol or diesel oil consumption per 100 km. In the new classification, cars will be labelled from A (for the most ecological in terms of CO₂ emission) to G (for the most harmful). However, the weight of the car will be taken into consideration in the labelling process.

Ecological and consumer organisations believe that this classification is a manifestation of lobbying from German car manufacturers, whose luxury car versions would achieve poor results in comparison to smaller foreign cars, as a consequence of which their German clients, who are sensitive to ecology issues, would be less interested in their products. In turn, car manufacturers are arguing that classifying the cars in low categories would be a mistake because their products are not worse in comparison to vehicles of similar weight.

The new classification of cars is to be introduced within three years at the latest. The government hopes that the labelling criteria will be when electric cars – which it has been promoting very strongly – start to be manufactured on a wider scale. Germany may be expected to start lobbying for introducing similar labelling in the European Union. <pop>