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Automotive

# Electric vehicles enjoy 2017 sales surge in Europe and US



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**Latest figures in the Europe and US show rapid increase in consumer appetite for electric vehicles since the turn of the year**

The rapid growth in demand for electric vehicles (EVs) continues apace, with

Figures **released yesterday** by the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) show a 38 per cent year-on-year boost in new EV registrations during the first quarter of 2017 across 32 European countries.

That follows far more modest overall sales increase of just 2.9 per cent during the whole of last year in Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Switzerland and the 28 European Union member states, the report said.

The figures show that in first quarter of this year there were 32,627 new EV registrations across Europe, compared to 23,703 during the same period in 2016.

ACEA said in a statement that "all the major EU markets made a significant contribution to Europe's positive results".

Sales more than doubled in Germany during the first quarter, while the UK saw year-on-year new EV registrations surge 47 per cent and Spain reported 45 per cent growth.

The UK's electric and low emission vehicles market is also likely to be given a further boost today as the government prepares to publish its highly-anticipated plan to reduce air pollution, with measures expected to encourage drivers away from higher polluting vehicles towards EVs and other low emission models.

Meanwhile, UK sales of diesel cars - which have faced criticism for contributing to the Britain's air pollution crisis - have seen their largest fall since the financial crisis amid fears diesel drivers could face additional charges in urban areas as part of the air quality plan.

Trade body SMMT's latest sales figures show a 27.3 per cent drop in new diesel car registrations in April 2017 compared to the same period last year.

And in the US - where the overall car market is some 16 per cent larger than Europe's - the EV surge is even more startling, **according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF)**. New figures show a 49 per cent jump in sales since the turn of the year to 40,700 units.

Worldwide EV sales have been boosted by automotive giants such as Volkswagen, BMW, and Daimler seeking to significantly expand their electric and alternatively-fuelled vehicle offerings in order to meet tougher emissions rules and mend industry reputational damage suffered after the 2015 VW diesel scandal.

The latest US figures also come as EV giant Tesla this week revealed its first quarter revenue has more than doubled and its forthcoming mass-market Model 3 vehicle is on schedule to hit the roads in July.

Nevertheless, the firm's overall losses widened 17 per cent to $330m as it increased spending ahead of the launch of the Model 3 and the expansion of its newly acquired solar business. Tesla is currently ramping up its production capabilities having set out an aim of manufacturing 500,000 cars per year in 2018, which is around six times its production levels of last year.

Elsewhere, amid significant growth of EV markets in Europe and the US, rules are reportedly currently being drafted in China that could force all global carmakers to produce electric vehicles in what is the world's largest car market.

While the plans are still under discussion, the ***Financial Times*** reports that as early as next year rules could come into force requiring at least eight per cent of manufacturers' sales in China to be electric vehicles, as the country bids to tackle its widespread air pollution crisis.

The sales quota could then be increased at regular intervals and carmakers missing the target could then be forced to buy credits from competitors which sell more EVs than the minimum requirement, suggesting the system could work in a similar fashion to the country's emerging emissions trading schemes.

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